



Tom Ballard

My mother's death? 'It's hard to blame a mountain'

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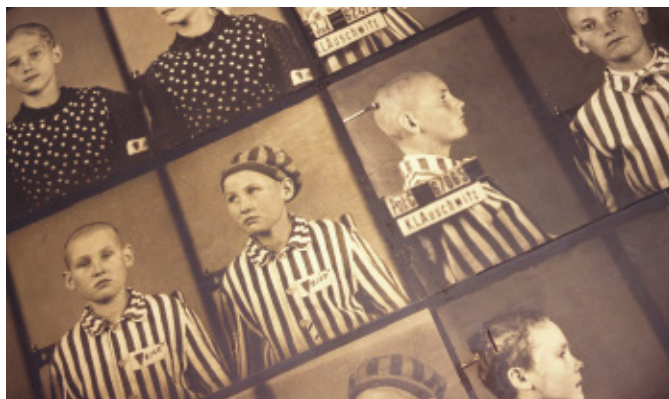
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The last Nazi war criminals

Now in their dotage, a handful of old men are being brought to justice

by Elisabeth Braw

16



A common foe

The Turkmen commander in Mosul fights uneasily alongside his Kurdish brother.

by Charles McDermid and Aso Mohammed

14

Galliano's stealth period

Four years after a shocking anti-Semitic rant lost him his job and his reputation, the bad boy of fashion is back

by Catherine Ostler

46



Tom Ballard

Twenty years after his mother Alison Hargreaves died on K2, her son has completed a record-breaking ascent of the six great north faces of the Alps

by Robert Chalmers

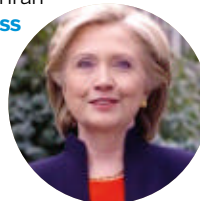
28

Hillary's tainted cash

A prominent backer has been trading with Iran

by Rory Ross

18



Going for a song

Enraptured by the haunting music of pygmy tribesmen, Louis Sarno gave up a suburban home in America for a life in Africa's poorest country

by Howard Swains

30

Big Shots

8 Pictures of the week

Page One

14 Isis: the rival commanders

16 Crime: the last Nazis

18 USA: Clinton finances

19 Politics: a tech snarl-up

20 Prisons: guides to terror

21 Defence: Greece at bay

22 Russia: a hybrid war

23 Health: HIV detector

24 EU: Adam LeBor

28 Face to Face: Tom Ballard

Business

25 Startups: Estonia

27 Smart Money: Rory Ross

Features

30 The pygmies of Baka'a

46 John Galiano is back

Weekend

53 Travel: Mallorca cycling

56 Travel: Fascist tourism

57 Travel: German wine

58 Film: Rudolph Herzog

59 Music: Assyrian chant

60 Art: Nick Foulkes

61 Kit: Graham Boynton

62 Books: gun culture

63 Books: homeliness

64 Fashion: Alice Hart-Davis

65 Culture: Harry Eyres

66 My Weekend: Frank Jensen

Editor's letter

The lure of the jungle



Richard Addis

editor@newsweek.com

This issue of *Newsweek* is dominated by a single story. Can you imagine leaving whatever corner of the Western world you currently inhabit to go and live in a hut in the jungle in the poorest nation on Earth - a country that is ravaged by war, disease, corruption and hunger? Can you imagine staying 30 years? Finding love and unsurpassable beauty there? Wanting to end your days there?

The greatest reporting often starts with a chance encounter and ends with a big idea. Our

cover story touches on the oldest of old philosophical debates, "the perfectibility of man". On one side there are those such as Thomas Hobbes, Machiavelli, St Augustine and the Greek Sophists who argue that humanity is basically beastly unless our savage natures are tamed by social contracts.

On the other side are those like Jean-Jacques Rousseau who say humanity is basically good if it is not corrupted, able to live in a harmonious state of nature

until the intervention of the evils of social life and property.

Our writer Howard Swains has a chance encounter at an Oxford museum that leads him to spend many months on the trail of Louis Sarno, a modern-day Rousseau, who has achieved the dream of "switching off, dropping out and creating a life immersed in one of the world's natural paradises". If you love your consumer culture, his story makes uncomfortable reading. It might just change your life.

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Europe, Middle East & Africa
Published by Newsweek Ltd,
a division of
IBT Media Group Ltd

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Big shots

China

Inferno

A petrochemical plant is always one spark away from catastrophe. This ferocious blaze at a pumping station in Zhangzhou in the Fujian province raged for hours, with firefighters struggling to get close enough to douse the flames. An explosion inside the oil storage facility caused the fire and it quickly spread to other parts of the factory, which makes paraxylene, a chemical used in production of polyester fibre and plastics. At least six people were injured.

Photograph: Reuters/Corbis









Syria

Holding hands

Two little girls hold hands, despair etched across their faces, their eyes welling up with grief following ground-to-ground missile attacks in Aleppo's Bab al-Hadeed district by the forces of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. They are alive, but lost and utterly helpless. Bab al-Hadeed is an Islamic State stronghold but there have also been internal clashes between foreign and local Isis militia.

Photograph: Abdalrhman Ismail/Corbis

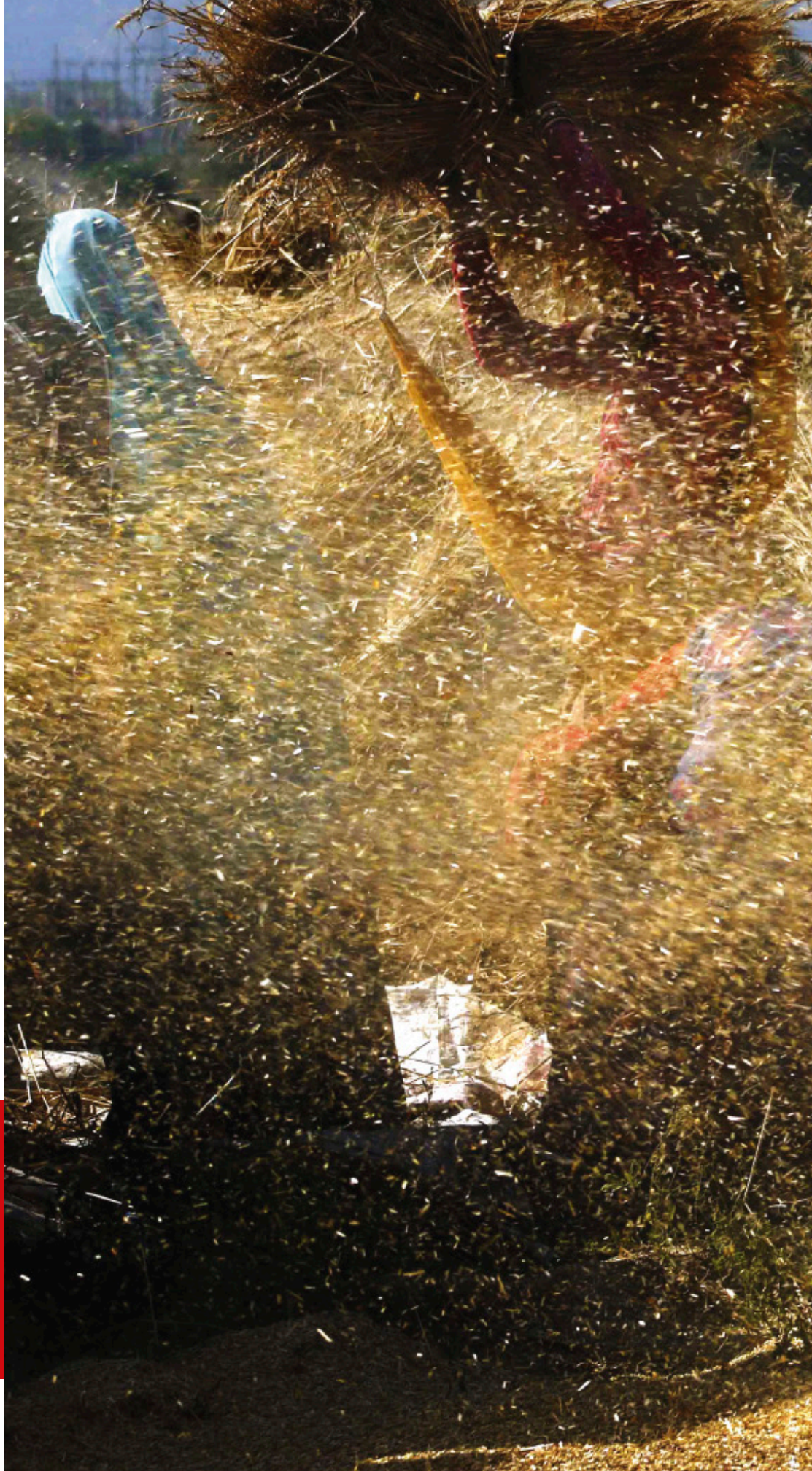
Big
shots

India

Golden storm

Barely visible amid their harvest, Indian women farmers thresh the wheat crop at a village on the outskirts of Beawar, some 184 kilometres southwest of Jaipur in western Rajasthan. According to legend, Beawar was so-named because the British posted a sign saying 'Be Aware' which locals took to be the name of their village. It was once a major centre of trade, especially in raw cotton.

Photograph: Getty



Big
shots







England

The Empire waxes again

The finishing touches are applied to a waxwork figure of Princess Leia in London's Madame Tussauds. It forms part of a Star Wars exhibition put together in anticipation of the franchise's hotly hyped new instalment: *The Force Awakens*. Carrie Fisher has confirmed that it will include a reprise of her career-defining role as the sister of Luke Skywalker.

Photograph: Lauren Hurley/PA

Big
shots

War on Isis

All disquiet on the Iraq front as rival warlords stand side by side against Isis – for now

Charles McDermid
and Aso Mohammed Kirkuk

✉@CharlesMcDermid

Najat Ali Salih is the top Kurdish officer on the Makhmour front about 30km south of Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan. His peshmerga fighters have suffered near-nightly suicide attacks and car bombs from Isis forces holed up in the nearby Arab city of Hawija for more than six months, most of that time without pay.

Seventeen peshmerga were paraded through the streets of Hawija in cages last month, and corpses dangled from the city's welcome signs. But Salih, the flinty 45-year-old known affectionately as Ali Fateh, has an air of cool confidence. He gives no rank and eschews a uniform for the traditional garb of the mountain fighter. In equal parts Che Guevara and Don Corleone, Salih is known as an eye-for-an-eye fighter. Salih says the terrorists aren't attacking right now, just watching. To clear them out of the city he needs money, heavier guns and air support, and he is extremely unhappy about asking for it.

As momentum shifts in the war against Isis, Kurdish forces have sealed off the north of the country, while Shia militias push west and the Iraqi army has gathered in the south.

This complex military mash-up - punctuated by

US-led air strikes and Iranian influence - offers a glimpse of Iraq's future, and the dangers of what might happen once the three forces succeed in driving Isis out of the country.

"We are Kurds," says Salih. "We have a big problem with the Iraqi government. Baghdad hasn't sent us our portion of the national budget and the peshmerga haven't been paid in four months."

Years of resistance have made Salih wary of Arab armies

and, like most Kurds, he is hard-wired for constant war. So he keeps a careful watch on the nearby ranks of his supposed allies, the Hashd al-Shaabi, or Popular Mobilisation Forces - Shia militias who rose up across Iraq during the jihadi blitzkrieg last summer. "The Hashd are a big problem. We are scared of what they will do in the future. We don't know what they will do," he says.

South-west of Salih's forward positions on the same battle

line, Colonel Tareq Abu Haider leads the Hashd al-Shaabi forces on the Bashir front, less than 20km outside the ethnically mixed city of Kirkuk, which is now held by the peshmerga.

Abu Haider's force of 3,000 Shia Turkmen suffered heavy casualties in the early fighting to control the strategic roadway into Kirkuk and its oilfields. The biggest threats now are Isis suicide bombers and deadly sniper teams sent out from Hawija.

Abu Haider is also battling perceptions: that the Shia militias are a bloodthirsty, sectarian force driven by religious zeal and revenge - and that they are controlled by Iran.

Last week, Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi responded to reports that Shia militias had been killing and looting by vowing to protect the "property and rights" of civilians in areas recaptured from Isis - but not all Iraqis are convinced.

Even so, at his Camp Laylan base, a commandeered rural school now festooned with green and black flags of Shia clerics and martyrs, the 54-year-old Abu Haider presents an avuncular figure. Some of his young volunteers are in their teens, relaxing in the tumbledown, tent-strewn bivouac. The guard at the gate isn't much taller than the AK-47 slung on his back.



"We are Kurds": Peshmerga commander Najat Ali Salih fears the future



"We are ready to fight for every piece of Iraq": Colonel Tareq Abu Haider with the Turkmen Hashd al-Shaabi from Kirkuk

Abu Haider was a colonel in the Iraqi Army before it was disbanded by the US in 2003, but he is vague about what he has done since then. He boasts that the commanders in his Brigade 16 eat the same food as the foot soldiers. He speaks of unity, duty and national pride.

"When Deash [the Arabic acronym for Isis] attacked, we didn't depend on the Iraqi government. We bought the guns out of our own pockets to defend Kirkuk. We do not allow strangers to defend our land," he says.

"Now we are ready to fight for every piece of Iraq, whether it is Mosul or anywhere," he adds. Mosul is Isis's self-proclaimed capital and Iraq's second largest city.

The Turkmen, Iraq's third-largest ethnic group, have for years been marginalised by Arabs and Kurds in Kirkuk province; but the Turkmen of

the Shia faith, far removed from the Shia heartland in southern Iraq, have had it even worse. When, therefore, Iraq's top Shia cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani issued a fatwa to fight Islamic State, the men came in droves to accept arms and salaries provided by the Baghdad government.

Experienced observers like Salih, however, are concerned that they won't want to give those arms back.

The concern from the West is that the Hashd al-Shaabi is controlled by Iran - a suspicion deepened by the presence of Iranian-linked advisers at Camp Laylan.

Here, a 60-year-old man in a dark green paratrooper jumpsuit identifies himself as Colonel Abu Sajad al-Turkmani. He says he belonged to the Badr Organisation, a group with open ties to Tehran, and that his role is to liaise between the

Shia Turkmen Brigade 16 and the central government.

"The Hashd are the strongest force in Iraq, no question," Turkmani says. This will be no comfort to commanders such as Salih, who realise the only counterweight to the Shia militias are fighters like his and the Iraqi Army, a force he openly disrespects. "The peshmerga are strong and independent, but the Hashd belong to the Iranians," Salih says. "The Iraqi Army is not a national army. We don't trust them," he says.

In Iraq, the fight against Isis was unified in name only. In another light, men such as Salih and Abu Haider could be called warlords - non-state actors with semi-private armies. If the fight against Isis were to end tomorrow, they could be on each other's doorsteps, eyeball to eyeball and armed to the teeth.

That irony is not lost on

Michael Stephens of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies: "Iraq is outsourcing the strength of the state to collective blocs that could eventually seriously rival the state, all in the quest for security."

Another perspective comes at a traditionally Kurdish village a few kilometres north of Camp Laylan, where hundreds of Sunni refugees from the city of Tikrit are squatting in unfinished homes and on constructions sites. A man who identifies himself as Abu Saif said they fled Isis, were unwelcomed by the local Kurds, and now are afraid to return home because of the Shia militias.

Asked whether he thinks the various factions would get along peacefully in a post-Islamic State Iraq, Saif gives a one-word answer - "Inshallah" - and turns away.

Crime

Prosecutors race against time to convict the last surviving Nazi war criminals

Elisabeth Braw Görlitz

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Martin Uebele has dealt with some horrific cases in his role as chief prosecutor in the east German city of Görlitz - but none as shocking as his current investigation of a local man accused of murdering thousands of innocent civilians more than 70 years ago.

Uebele soon hopes to put the 90-year-old man on trial for his role in the shooting of 18,000 Jewish inmates on 3 November 1943 at the Majdanek concentration camp in Poland. At the time, the man - whose identity cannot be revealed until he is convicted - was 19

years old and working as an SS guard. He didn't shoot but he did nothing to stop the massacre either.

A court-appointed physician is currently evaluating the man's health, with a decision expected shortly as to whether he is fit enough to face a court.

"As a guard, he was part of the killing machine, which makes him an accessory to murder," says Uebele tells *Newsweek*. "If he is incapable of participating in the court proceedings I will have to close the case."

The mass murder at Majdanek, dubbed Operation Harvest Festival by the Germans, is an undisputed

event. Yet for nearly seven decades German prosecutors were unable to bring charges against guards who were present at such killings.

But the case of John Demjanjuk four years ago changed that, and now the race is on to hunt down alleged Nazis associated with mass killings.

A court in Munich ruled that although there wasn't enough evidence to convict the 91-year-old Demjanjuk of murder, he was an accessory to the crime. He was sentenced to five years in prison but died while appealing the verdict.

The passage of time means there won't be many more opportunities to bring Nazi war

criminals to court - earlier this month one of the most wanted remaining Nazis, Soren Kam, died unpunished in Denmark - but without the landmark Demjanjuk ruling, most would likely not be happening at all.

Prosecutors no longer need proof that each guard personally participated in murder.

Charges can be filed against them merely for their presence at the time of the killings.

Dr Efraim Zuroff, a Brooklyn-born Jew who is the Simon Wiesenthal Centre's chief Nazi-hunter, is determined to round up as many suspects as possible in what he calls Operation Last Chance.

"Life expectancy is working



Key precedent: the 2011 conviction of death camp guard John Demjanjuk as an accessory to murder opened the door to more cases

in our favour," says Zuroff, who now lives in Israel. "Germany has good healthcare. These war criminals have the bad fortune of being alive."

Zuroff knows he won't find anyone as important as Adolf Eichmann, the architect of Adolf Hitler's Final Solution, which allowed for the transportation of Europe's Jews to concentration camps. Eichmann was tried in Israel in 1961 and executed the following year.

"The people we're chasing now were guards, they drove trains and buses," he says. "It's not possible to prove they're guilty of murder, but thanks to Demjanjuk the bar is much lower."

Zuroff receives many leads, which he passes on to Germany's official Nazi-hunting agency, the Zentrale Stelle, which is obliged to act on information from the public.

"What we have to prove is that the person was serving at the extermination camp while people were being sent to the gas chambers," says Kurt Schrimm, the Zentrale Stelle's chief prosecutor. "And we have to prove the nature of their duties. A camp cook was less involved in war crimes than a camp guard."

Schrimm took over as head of the Zentrale Stelle 15 years ago and has been combing through the agency's 1.6 million cards containing information about some 100,000 suspected war criminals.

On 21 April, a 93-year-old former Auschwitz guard called Oskar Gröning goes on trial in Lüneburg, 45 minutes south-east of Hamburg, accused of assisting in the murders of 300,000 inmates between May and July 1944. Gröning's duties allegedly involved sorting the money inmates had brought with them.

During those two months, at least 137 trains carrying Hungarian Jews arrived at the camp, and the prosecution alleges that Gröning personally supervised the ransacking of their belongings on at least one



Auschwitz victims: next week a 93-year-old guard goes on trial

occasion. He also knew that the inmates would encounter gas, not water in the shower rooms.

In accordance with German law, Gröning isn't named in the court documents but he has identified himself, describing his recurring nightmares of watching another guard hurl a newly arrived baby against a wall until it died. He argues that his guilt is different from those who killed. He just watched.

Later this spring, another 93-year-old former Auschwitz guard, accused of assisting in the murders of 170,000 inmates will go on trial for overseeing 92 trains containing Hungarian Jews arriving at the death camp. The arrivals were classified as usable and unusable. The unusable ones were sent to their death in the gas chamber. But some of them tried to escape, and prosecutors accuse the SS officer of having participated in "brutally ending their escape".

And in Neubrandenburg, an eastern German city two hours north of Berlin, a 94-year-old Auschwitz SS medic is about to go on trial, accused of assisting in the murders of 3,681 inmates between August and September 1944.

"The failures after the war were simply too big. Many,

many culprits got away," says Dr Josef Schuster, president of Germany's Jewish association. He believes there's a public benefit to the trials because they deliver invaluable material about the Nazi regime to future generations of historians.

Before Christmas, Martin Uebele, the chief prosecutor in Görlitz, searched the 90-year-old man's home and read the accusation to him. Now, the doctor's report awaits. If it gets to court, there'll be some sympathy for the man, given his age and health - but it won't be forthcoming from Wilhelm Wolff, a German Jew who fled with his parents to Britain in 1933 but is now back in Germany serving as a rabbi.

"Every person who's

committed a crime has to defend himself in front of a court. It doesn't matter how old you are," he says.

Nobody knows how many Nazi war criminals are still at large. The overshadowing matter is who's alive. Currently, some 30 death camp guards are under investigation by prosecutors in cities including Stuttgart, Munich, Mainz, Leipzig, Kiel, Nuremberg and Frankfurt. The Zentrale Stelle has also identified seven suspects living abroad, including one in Israel.

For the Nazi hunters and prosecutors, it's a race against time. They know better than anyone that the race can't be won, but nothing will dampen their fervour.

Two Numbers

4.8%

The rate of unemployment in Germany, lowest in the EU. The percentage out of work across the EU has also fallen to 9.8% - the lowest since September.

26%

The rate of unemployment in Greece, highest in the EU. This is followed by Spain with 23.2%. Youth unemployment across the EU is currently 21%.

Politics

Hillary runs for White House and into row over Ukrainian benefactor's trade links with Iran

Rory Ross London

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Enemies of Hillary Clinton waiting to discredit her bid for the White House are likely to seize on news that one of the biggest benefactors to the Clinton Foundation has been trading with Iran and may be in breach of US sanctions imposed on the country.

Ukrainian oligarch Victor Pinchuk, 54, has courted the Clintons for at least nine years - in the United States, the Alps and Ukraine.

Earlier this year, he was confirmed as the largest contributor to the Clinton Foundation, whose aims include the creation of "economic opportunity and growth". He also has links to the Tony Blair Foundation and represented its biggest single donor in 2013.

The fourth richest man in Ukraine, Pinchuk owns Interpipe Group, a Cyprus-incorporated manufacturer of seamless pipes used in oil and gas sectors.

Newsweek has seen declarations and documents from Ukraine that show a series of shipments from Interpipe to Iran in 2011 and 2012, including railway parts and products commonly used in the oil and gas sectors.

Among a number of high-value invoices for products related to rail or oil and gas, one shipment for \$1.8m (£1.7m) in May 2012 was for "seamless hot-worked steel pipes for pipelines" and destined for a city near the Caspian Sea.

Both the rail and oil and gas sectors are sanctioned by the US, which specifically prohibits any single invoice to the Iranian



Cue controversy: Hillary Clinton's opponents are likely to seize on a backer's dealings with Iran and possible breach of US sanctions

petrochemical industry worth more than \$1m.

However, US sanctions laws are complex and, in certain areas, ill-defined. Interpipe may qualify for penalties due to the mere presence on American soil of North American Interpipe Inc, its United States subsidiary.

The US authorities can also penalise non-American companies with no base in the US at all which it judges to be working counter to its foreign policy, as happened to Zhuhai Zhenrong, a Chinese oil company, in 2012.

Being denied access to US markets and the US banking

system could prove catastrophic to Interpipe, given that accountancy giant Ernst & Young has raised questions over its viability.

The person in charge of this list of non-US companies is the Secretary of State, who between 2009 to 2013 - the period during which Pinchuk's company was trading with Iran - was Hillary Clinton.

In November 2014, the now-retired Republican congressman, Steve Stockman, wrote to the US Department of the Treasury, questioning Interpipe's dealings with Iran.

Newsweek has seen a copy of that letter, in which Stockman refers to a "body of evidence" detailing "exports from Interpipe to Iranian entities" that "may have contravened US sanctions to Iran".

Pinchuk is considered to be one of the world's foremost collectors of contemporary art. He counts Sir Elton John and Bill Clinton among his close friends and the Ukrainian owns a house in central London, which he bought for a record-breaking £80m.

Pinchuk became particularly friendly with Bill Clinton. In 2010, he invited the former president to his 50th birthday party in the French ski resort of Courchevel. In return, Pinchuk attended Clinton's 65th in 2011, and was a guest at the inauguration of Clinton's Presidential Library. The Clintons spoke at Pinchuk's Yalta European Strategy conference, which seeks integration between Ukraine and Europe.

Pinchuk's office did not respond to requests for comment on this story from *Newsweek*.



Communications glitch: David Cameron is failing to get his message across to key electors

Politics

Tories struggle with their software as Labour claims to echo Obama's hi-tech connection with voters

Luke Hurst London

✉@hurstwords

The UK's Conservative Party is struggling to manage its voter-targeting software leaving its campaigners frustrated, while Labour believes its superior strategy will help it outperform the polls and win a number of key marginal seats at the 7 May general election.

Figures familiar with both campaigns have told *Newsweek* about significant differences between the use of technology to effectively target swing voters - an area into which the parties have funnelled millions of pounds with the aim of

replicating the success of American campaigns such as that run by Barack Obama in 2007-08.

Britain's general election is the closest in a generation, with polls putting Labour and the Conservatives neck-and-neck, and the surge of smaller parties such as Ukip and the Scottish National Party making a coalition government highly likely. Both main parties are targeting core voters. But experts on voter-targeting software from both sides agree that the Conservatives have fallen considerably behind Labour in leveraging modern electioneering techniques - a

misstep which may well cost them the election.

Labour is using a system called Contact Creator, based on software from credit ratings company Experian, that allows them to target voters based on their interests and likely voting intentions. The Conservatives have used similar systems - first Merlin, which reportedly crashed during by-elections, and more recently Votesource - but have struggled to implement them on a local level.

"There is a latent culture of grumpiness in [local] associations - because of centrally imposed initiatives,"

says Dr Anthony Ridge-Newman, author of *Cameron's Conservatives and the Internet: Change, Culture and Cyber Toryism*, who stood as a Conservative candidate in 2010.

"Merlin is a good example of that, as is Votesource," he adds, "because the party is poorly organised in its approach. It's not necessarily the technologies. It's how late in the day they leave them to be implemented. And the lack of appropriate training and understanding of these technologies at a local level."

So exasperated are some local branches that they say they have reverted to using Excel spreadsheets. ConservativeHome editor Paul Goodman has called Votesource "the fly in the ointment".

Mike Joslin, chief executive of Organise Consulting, a political communications company that is working on the Labour campaign, says the technology Labour is using is more advanced than that used to great effect by Obama in 2012. "It is personal campaigning, targeting people based on what they're interested in," he says. "They are using that information to build a relationship."

He says Labour has spent more than a decade building up a centralised database on Contact Creator, which provides party activists with accurate information used to target individuals. "The Labour party is confident in doing very well in local constituencies based on the fact that it has heavily invested and it is making a difference, and the opinion polls show that."

Joslin cites figures from Harrow East, a Conservative seat that has seen Labour rise to a four-point lead in national polls commissioned by the Conservative peer Lord Ashcroft.

"They focus on the media," says Joslin of the Conservative campaign, "and that's where they are making a fatal mistake in the general election."

Society

Access to jihadi book turns prisons into 'Islamic extremism incubators'

Felicity Capon London
 @felicitycapon

The extreme views of a "racist, homophobic and anti-Semite", who supports killing non-Muslims and "stoning adulterers" are being made available to prison imams and prisoners throughout England and Wales with the blessing of the authorities, according to a former adviser to the UK government.

Haras Rafiq, managing director of the Quilliam Foundation, a counter-extremism think tank, warned that prisons have become "incubators for Islamic extremism" by allowing inmates to read the works of controversial South Asian cleric, Abul Ala Maududi. He described Maududi - who died in 1979 - as the "grandfather of Islamism".

Newsweek has discovered that hundreds of gold-laminated, hardback copies of Maududi's analyses of the Koran were distributed last month at a training event for prison imams and chaplains held at the prison service college in Rugby. The books came from the Markfield Institute for Higher Education, part of the Islamic Foundation, a UK-based organisation that publishes educational materials on Islam.

A spokesman for the commercial sales arm of the Islamic Foundation, Kube Publishing, confirmed that it does supply books to the Muslim Chaplaincy and publishes books by Maududi, but said that it had no contracts with Her Majesty's Prison Service, and was unaware of the prison training event.

The Islamic Foundation is "inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood", according to Rashad Ali, a Counter Terrorism



Closer to God: a Muslim inmate prays at a prison in London

Interventionist for the Home Office, and is the only publishing house to have published the entire translations of commentaries on the Koran by Sayyid Qutb, who was widely cited as the scholar who most inspired the al-Qaida leader, Osama bin Laden.

Rafiq, an adviser to the UK government on combating extremism in the wake of the 2005 terrorist bombings in London, said Maududi was the "grandfather of Islamism", who called for Sharia law, an Islamic State and violent jihad.

"He was a racist, a homophobe, an anti-Semite, and a man who believed in the Hudood laws, laws that proscribe killing those who change their religion and stoning adulterers," says Rafiq. "We've got prisons allowing literature by Islamist extremists. Prisons are not restricting or filtering this literature and they are becoming incubators for Islamic extremism."

While a minority of the

imams and chaplains at the event in Rugby expressed concern about the books, they were told by HM Prison Authorities that the only banned author from prison libraries is Anwar al-Awlaki, an American-born Muslim cleric who advocated violent jihad against the US, and was linked to a series of attacks including 9/11.

In one of his books, Maududi says: "There are only two methods of dealing with an apostate. Either make him an outlaw by depriving him of his citizenship and allowing him mere existence, or end his life. The first method is definitely more severe than the second, because he exists in a state in which 'he neither lives nor dies'. Killing him is preferable. That way both his agony and the agony of the society are brought to an end simultaneously."

Hannah Stuart, a research fellow at the Henry Jackson Society and an expert on extremism, terrorism and jihadi ideology, said the ideas expressed in Maududi's books are "inherently violent if not explicitly violent" and that revelations about their availability in UK prisons was "worrying".

"All jihadis have the ideas that Maududi expresses at their root," says Stuart. "His books have the same underpinning as what Islamic State are doing".

Both Rafiq and Stuart cautioned against outright censorship of Maududi's books. But Stuart described them as "incredibly powerful" and said they could lead to extremist views.

The Ministry of Justice, which oversees prisons in England and Wales, declined to comment.

Perspectives

Germany

Asparagus season has officially begun in Germany.

For the next two months, "Spargelzeit" will dominate German supermarket shelves and pop-up huts across the country. Around 55,000 tonnes of the so-called "noble vegetable" will be produced during its short spring season, and a kilo of asparagus can fetch up to €14.98.

Ireland

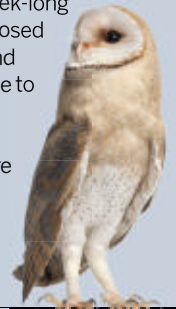
A woman has gone on trial in the Republic of Ireland

charged with assisting the suicide of another woman in Dublin four years ago. Gail O'Rourke, 43, is the first person in the history of the state to be charged with the offence. The trial is expected to last up to two weeks. If convicted, O'Rourke could face up to 14 years in jail.

England

A café populated by owls in London is ruffling feathers

after opening at a secret location due to threats from animal rights activists. The aim of the week-long event is supposed to educate and expose people to wild birds of prey, but animal welfare groups have branded the café as "cruel".



Sweden

A grovelling letter of apology from a man

who was arrested by the Swedish police for drunken behaviour has gone viral after Linköping city police force posted it online. "I just wanted to apologise for my poor behaviour," the letter reads. "Peeing is something you do in the toilet and no other place. Keep up the good work."

Lack of fuel leaves Greek military helpless in face of Turkish aggression

Elisabeth Braw London

✉@elisabethbraw

Greece can no longer defend itself against Turkish military aggression because its financial woes are crippling its armed forces.

Speaking exclusively to *Newsweek*, Prof Costas Koliopoulos, a military expert at Panteion University in Athens says: "Turkey is the reason we have very large armed forces. And now Turkey is sensing a shift in the balance of power. Their increased activities in the Aegean are an attempt to wear us out."

Relations between Turkey and Greece have been tense for decades, thanks to the division of Cyprus and the ongoing dispute over the sovereignty of the Aegean Sea area, which separates the two countries. Every year, Greece reports hundreds of incursions by Turkey's navy and airforce into its territory, arguing that they are forced to scramble jets or send out naval ships to intercept them.

Of the 31 days of March, only 10 didn't feature uninvited Turkish planes entering Greek airspace. On 20 March, 12 Turkish fighter planes violated Greek airspace no less than 38



Provocative neighbour: several reports have surfaced of Turkish frigates entering Greek territorial waters

times. "Two engagements ensued with the Hellenic Air Force interception fighters," says the Hellenic General National Defence General Staff's report.

Figures from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) show that last year Greece spent €4bn on defence, 2.5% of the country's GDP. Compared with other European countries that's a very high figure. "Greece has signed several very large deals in the past years, including one for €1.7bn for German Leopard panzers," explains Sam Perlo-Freeman, head of SIPRI's Military Expenditure project.

"One can ask how necessary those purchases really were." Koliopoulos, who maintains close links to the military, says that while the government cuts impacted on the armed forces' morale, the biggest problem is the armed forces ability to acquire fuel.

Turkey knows that if it keeps crossing into Greek airspace and entering Greek territorial waters, Greece has to respond. But without fuel or properly maintained equipment, Greece won't be able to frighten its Nato ally away.

Greece could reduce its military manpower but "dismissing large numbers of

military-trained men in a country with 50% youth unemployment might not be a good idea," says Perlo-Freeman. The government is also keen to keep the military on its good side.

"You'd be very hard-pressed to find one senior officer favourable to Syriza, but they are comfortable with [Right-wing defence minister Panos] Kammenos," says Perlo-Freeman. That's the same Kammenos who after taking office in January flew over a group of Turkish - islets, causing Turkish fighter planes to scramble.



Jon Snow

Veteran Channel 4
News presenter

If I ruled the world

One law I would pass? A law ruling that all traffic light systems revert to flashing amber at 8pm until 6am, thereby vastly easing urban congestion.

One thing I would ban? All private cars from major city centres – it's a matter of human rights. One man in a box on wheels should not enjoy 10 times

the road space as that enjoyed by a pedestrian or a cyclist.

Who I'd ennoble? I would not ennoble anyone, I would do away with all name-changing honours: there's no one whose reputation has ever been improved by having a title.

Who I'd send to Siberia? Myself – I have always wanted to go –

preferably on the Trans Siberian Railway.

Where I'd build my palace? Primrose Hill, London

Compulsory book to read? *Hare Goes to War* by Alison Uttley, in which the stoats and weasels are an instructive lot when it comes to understanding the nastiness of war.



Rob Cooke
Ecologist

Protecting species during development

"Developers must take account of European protected species, including great crested newts, to comply with the law. With increased demand and public sector cutbacks, dealing with an increased volume of licence applications is challenging. Understanding how newts will be affected requires knowledge of local populations. Newts hibernate in winter. Since last year a new technique allows newt detection via water samples at any time of year by identifying DNA residue."

Rob Cooke is a member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and director of Natural England, the Government's advisory agency on the natural environment. He explains: "The environmental consultancy profession is only about 20 years old. Developers occasionally are advised to take steps that exceed those needed to meet licensing requirements. Conversely, inexperienced consultants may be pressurised by developers to cut corners."

"Consultants should clearly outline the boundaries of what they can offer. Joining a professional body gives a degree of protection, insurance and standards regulation. Natural England may fast-track consultants for licences if they are members of a recognised professional body, because we know they're professional."



Edited by
Andy Friedman
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Russia

Former Nato chief says Europe is 'at hybrid war' with Putin

Damien Sharkov London
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An increasingly unpredictable Russia is engaging in a "hybrid war" with Europe, seeking to destabilise states from within, and is more dangerous now than during the days of the USSR, Nato's former secretary general Anders Fogh Rasmussen has warned.

In an interview with *Newsweek*, Rasmussen says he fears Russia could use similar military tactics to those it is using in Ukraine.

Relations between Russia and Europe have hit their lowest since the Cold War in light of the Ukrainian conflict and the increasing incursions into European airspace by Russian military aircraft.

"Russia has adopted this approach and it is a mix of very well-known conventional warfare and new, more sophisticated propaganda and

disinformation campaigns including Russian efforts to influence public opinion through financial links with political parties within Nato and engagement in NGOs."

"We know the nationalistic Right-wing parties have expressed a clear sympathy for Russia, so have some of the far Left. We have such parties in Greece, Hungary, Bulgaria and France," Rasmussen says.

"I think the Greeks are playing with fire," he said, commenting on Greek prime minister Alexis Tsipras's recent trip to Moscow. "Russia can't rescue Greece economically. Russia itself is broke. Greece can only be rescued by the West."

According to Rasmussen, Russia has also bared its teeth in more conventional ways, as frequent reminders of the country's nuclear arsenal have alarmed the West in ways which even the USSR was reluctant to do so.

"Even during the Soviet time they were hesitant to talk about nuclear conflict. Now we see an open debate. In that respect the Russia of today is more dangerous than the Soviet Union. The USSR was more predictable than the current leadership."

Although Rasmussen believes that in the foreseeable future Nato "will remain the cornerstone of European security", he adds that there is need for evolution. He proposes that Nato ought to revise the nature of what it considers an act of aggression, to include such hybrid threats.

"Already at the Nato summit we took a first important step in updating the terminology of 'armed attack' to include cyber attacks. Now we consider cyber security as part of collective security. I think in light of Russia's hybrid warfare we should have an even closer look at the term."

European security chiefs on Nato's eastern flank have long expressed concern about Russia's hybrid methods. Most recently Poland's head of the National Security Bureau General Stanislaw Koziej said that although Poland felt safe from open Russian aggression because of its Nato membership, "we cannot be that certain in the case of threats under the threshold of war - hidden aggression, diversion".

"The West should obviously not be naive," says Rasmussen. "It is necessary to strengthen methods against hybrid threats. We need more investment in cyber security, better-funded intelligence and more shared knowledge among allies, to give us better situational awareness to inform our use of special operations forces."



Anders Fogh Rasmussen: "The West should not be naive."

Paper and phones could offer easy cheap diagnosis for HIV and Ebola

Conor Gaffey London
@ConorGaffey

Diseases such as HIV and Ebola are on the verge of being diagnosed almost instantly using paper-based technology costing less than \$1.

The devices, known as biosensing platforms, are made from cheap materials including plastic film and cellulose paper. Results are captured using a smartphone camera and sent back to hospitals or clinics for immediate diagnosis.

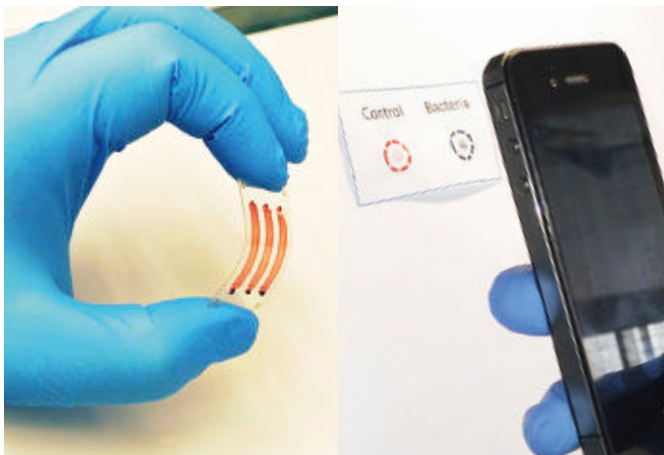
Current HIV diagnosis can cost up \$48 (€45) for a negative test and \$64 (€60) for a positive test. Checks for Ebola cost some \$100 (€95), take up to six hours to produce a result and require sophisticated diagnostic equipment, the type of which is often unavailable in western Africa where the disease is especially prevalent.

The World Health Organisation estimates that there were approximately 35 million people infected with HIV at the end of 2013, almost 70% of whom were living in sub-Saharan Africa.

A single drop of blood is enough to detect the presence of pathogens including the HIV and E. coli bacteria responsible for common food poisoning.

This potential breakthrough, pioneered by researchers from Florida Atlantic and Stanford universities, could transform

“Our idea was to have inexpensive, robust devices which a nurse can use and test all the people in a village”



Making biosense: diseases may soon be tested for via smartphones

diagnosis particularly in developing countries.

“The methods used to test for diseases are very expensive in developing countries,” says Dr Waseem Asghar, of Florida Atlantic University, who led the biosensing study.

“Our idea was to have inexpensive, robust devices which a nurse can use and test all the people in a village and then send the images back from a cellphone.”

The research team is looking to expand the number of diseases that can be diagnosed using the biosensing platforms. Asghar says that they are currently developing an Ebola substitute to test the device, since they cannot access live samples of the deadly virus.

In the past 12 months, Ebola has killed more than 10,000 out of a total of 25,000 people infected in west Africa.

The platforms are still in their preliminary stages and have yet to undergo clinical trials. However, Asghar is optimistic, estimating that they could be commercially available within a year.

“If they are produced on a

large scale, I would say that in the future they could be sold for a few cents each,” he says.

Researchers tested two distinct platforms, one made from thin plastic film, the other from cellulose paper. When bacteria were present, gold nanoparticles in the cellulose paper stuck to the bacteria and the paper changed colour as a result.

Other potential uses of the technology includes cancer patients being able to monitor their white blood cell counts during chemotherapy and testing for sperm fertility levels. Once used, the devices can be disposed of safely by burning.

The study’s supervisor, Dr Utkan Demirci of Stanford University, says it has the potential to speed up diagnosis exponentially.

“On the top of a mountain in Africa you cannot carry a huge diagnostic machine. You need things that are simple to use and carry that result in rapid transfer,” says Demirci.

“These tools are definitely going to change access to diagnostic technologies all over the world.”

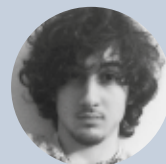
The week ahead

Monday 20 April

Deadline for Greece to announce a list of financial reforms to the European Union in hope of unlocking access to €7.2bn (£5.19bn) in aid. Deadline for UK citizens to register to vote in the British general election on 7 May.

Tuesday 21 April

In the trial of one of the two Boston Marathon bombers, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, prosecutors will mount a case for him to face the death sentence for 2013 attack.



Wednesday 22 April

Deadline for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to form a majority coalition government. President Reuven Rivlin may offer a two-week extension if no agreement.

Friday 24 April

Eurozone finance ministers hold key meeting in Latvian capital, Riga, to decide on the release of €7.2bn (£5.19bn) in bailout funds to Greece.

Tech giant Apple releases its new smart watch, the Apple Watch, in its first move into wearable technology. Prices range from €332 to €16,149.

Saturday 25 April

The date that the second child of Prince William and Kate Middleton, and sibling to Prince George, is expected to arrive. The Duchess of Cambridge is to give birth at a private hospital in Paddington, west London.

Sunday 26 April

More than 30,000 elite and amateur runners will line up for the annual London Marathon.





Adam LeBor
in Budapest

✉@adamlebor

Politics

Migrants face brutality as Bulgaria recreates the Iron Curtain

“
They kept beating
my head and back.
First one soldier
and then another.
They even beat me
as they dragged
me to the car

The Iron Curtain is back. Topped with barbed wire, monitored by CCTV, patrolled by border guards, it stretches along part of the Bulgarian and Greek frontiers with Turkey. Twenty-five years after the end of communism, the new fortress Europe aims to keep out refugees fleeing the carnage in Syria and Iraq, with sometimes brutal results.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has called on the Bulgarian authorities to investigate the deaths in March of two Iraqi men stopped at the Bulgarian border. The men, part of a group from the persecuted Yazidi minority who were fleeing Islamic State, reportedly had their possessions seized and were beaten up. Two later died, apparently of their injuries and hypothermia, on the Turkish side of the frontier. A third was taken to hospital in Edirne in Turkey.

“We know that two people died but we still don’t know under what circumstances,” says Boris Cheshirkov, a spokesman for the UNHCR in Sofia. “Fences are not the solution. Migration flows need to be managed. We are concerned that the use of violence may put people at risk, forcing refugees, including those with small children, to take perilous journeys across the mountains.”

Refusing refugees entry, a policy known as “pushback”, is in breach of Bulgaria’s national and international legal obligations that guarantee the right to ask for asylum. “Bulgaria is an EU member state and has signed the Refugee Convention,” says Cheshirkov. “It has to provide refugees with an opportunity to speak to officials and explain why they are fleeing. In order to do that they need access to the territory.”

Instead, further restrictions are planned. Keen to join the Schengen Zone of visa-free travel inside the EU, Bulgaria plans to extend the border fence

to cover its entire 160km land frontier with Turkey, part of a “containment plan”. The strategy is working: in 2013 11,500 people illegally crossed into Bulgaria. In 2014, 40,000 people tried to cross illegally, of whom 6,000 succeeded.

But containment exacts a human cost. Reports by Human Rights Watch in April 2014 on Bulgaria, and by Amnesty International on Greece, include detailed accounts from refugees of being hit repeatedly by border guards, having possessions stolen and being forced back to Turkey.

Abdullah, an Afghan asylum seeker, told of how he was systematically beaten by Bulgarian border guards. “They kept beating my head and my back. First one soldier and then another. I tried to escape but they beat me even more. They even beat me as they were dragging me to the car.”

Bulgarian officials reject claims of brutality. The country is under intense pressure from refugees and illegal immigrants, says foreign ministry spokeswoman Betina Joteva. The government announced a new plan in March for the integration of refugees but needs more financial support from the EU. New border control protocols are needed with Turkey and Greece.

“Bulgaria is seriously committed to protecting the EU’s external border and we have no intention of failing in this obligation,” she says.

The European Commission has written to Bulgaria about the allegations that border guards used violence and “pushback”. But new evidence gathered by Human Rights Watch in August and September 2014 indicates that the policy is still in operation.

Human Rights Watch documented three separate incidents of forced return from Bulgaria to Syria, involving at least 43 people, all Syrians, including children. The accounts mirror those of the refugees in the April 2014 reports and accuse Bulgarian border guards of sustained brutality, beatings with batons, fists and boots and forcing asylum seekers to lie face down on the ground. “The European Commission needs to investigate these violations of EU law and put its foot down,” says Human Rights Watch’s Lydia Gall.

Iraqi Yazidis fleeing to the EU should be treated as refugees, says Natasha Bertaud of the European Commission. “Any measure taken by Bulgaria or any other member states should be in line with applicable procedures of EU and international law.” The Commission, says Bertaud, will continue to monitor the situation in Bulgaria.

But as pushback continues, monitoring, say human rights activists, is not enough.



Business

Enterprise

Millions invested into Estonian startups after boom in tiny Baltic country's tech industry



Angel: Peter Thiel helped raise \$6m for Estonian Transferwise

Elisabeth Braw Tallinn
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Last month, the Estonian tech startup Testlio.com received \$1m (€945,000) in seed funding from US investors. Despite the fact that Estonia has a population of just 1.25 million, the funding was business as usual. A few weeks earlier, Testlio's fellow Estonian startup Bondora.com had received €4.5m in venture capital funding from US investors, while Transferwise.com received €48m from Richard Branson, Silicon Valley king-maker and venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz and Peter Thiel, co-founder of PayPal.

All Markus Villig, whose taxi-app startup, Taxify, boasts more than 200,000 users in eight European countries and

recently raised €1.4m from US and European investors, needed to set up his company was a digitally enabled ID card, a computer, a credit card and a few minutes. Villig didn't even leave his desk.

That's because Estonia has successfully overcome disadvantages - such as an unenviable location, nestled next to Russia and a small population - to become the world's top startup nation. The country currently has 350 recent startups - one per every 3,700 citizens - and the government expects the number of new companies to reach 1,000 by 2020.

Early success stories - Skype in Estonia - attract talent and spawn more startups. "Most of my friends have their own startups now," says Villig. "Ten years ago people wanted to work for large companies."

Yet whereas Silicon Valley startups can hope for early funding from incubators followed by multimillion-dollar investments by venture capitalists, Estonian entrepreneurs turn to peer clubs and apply for grants from government agencies. The government-funded Startup Institute teaches them to pitch to large American and European VCs.

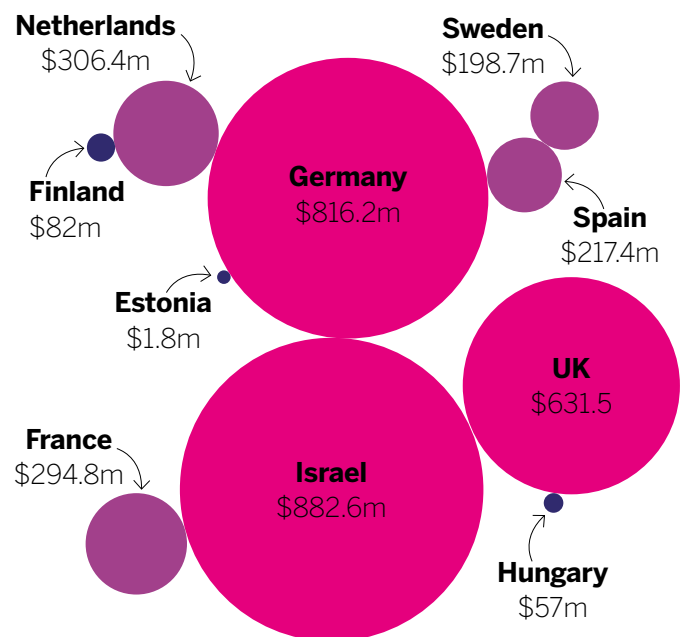
But according to Harriet Maltby, a researcher at the Legatum Institute, a London think-tank that publishes the annual Prosperity Index

report, Estonia trails the UK on measures such as startup costs and the rule of law. "And the main obstacle for the Estonian entrepreneurial ambition is perception," she says. "Data shows that in 2014, 70% of Britons thought the UK is a good place for people to start a business, compared with 51% of Estonians. If it is to rival the UK as Europe's startup capital, it is not just global perceptions Estonia needs to focus on."

Estonia's government now acts like a new tech firm itself, attracting "e-residents" who

can set up and run a cloud-based business remotely after one visit. The country hopes for 10 million virtual residents by 2025. Today all government information is digitised, with backups stored in embassies abroad. "It might be hard to imagine a world without documents, but for us it is normal," says Taavi Kotka, the Estonian government's chief technology officer. "We face a bigger danger of cyber-attacks than physical, of course, but we keep in mind that we have quite a ferocious neighbour."

Venture capital invested, 2nd half 2014 (US\$)



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Fashion

Rocket scientists to work on revolutionary stilettos

Felicity Capon London

✉@felicitycapon

Designing towering stilettos might not seem like rocket science - but that hasn't stopped a group of rocket scientists from creating what it hopes will be the world's safest, most comfortable high heels.

As former head of recruiting at California-based SpaceX, Dolly Singh used to walk around the cavernous spacecraft company in high heels. It was a painful experience.

Not wearing high heels was one solution; designing her own was another.

"When you rip apart a high heel, you realise that it is simply a very flat thin strip of steel, offering no support," says Singh. "A metal rod is not a good idea to stand on all day,"

Singh has now founded Thesis Couture, a company dedicated to "load-balancing, interlocking footwear technology" and is due to launch her collection online in autumn. The company's mission is "to create sexy high heels that feel great to wear".

Singh claims she now has "some of the smartest people on the planet" applying their

knowledge of physics, engineering and technology to her shoes. Among them is astronaut Dr Garrett Reisman, rocket scientist Dr Hans Koenigsmann and orthopaedic surgeon Dr Andy Goldberg.

The company will make the high-end couture shoes by considering the statics, dynamics and kinematics that inform how a high heel shoe serves the foot. It will experiment with new materials to give the wearer "optimum load distribution" as well as mitigating shock and friction.

Singh points out that no other product in the world is designed by people who "don't give a damn about the actual field application."

Thesis Couture will open a reservation list in autumn with a first "founder's edition" of 1,500 pairs, priced at \$925 (£874), targeting female professionals. Next year, the company will launch its first collection, with a pair of the shoes selling between \$400-900 (£378-851) depending on the style.

"It's never going to feel like a tennis shoe," Singh concedes. "But it doesn't have to feel like a torture device either."



Footloose: "smartest people on the planet" will design Thesis Couture

The smart money

Artificial intelligence could be our only hope in a world of data



Rory Ross

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Despite his millions, the world of Moscow property development left Nikolay Gurianov "really bored". Two motorbike crashes later, he reckoned it was time to move on, find a new business, and swap two wheels for four.

He asked a marketer: "What is the most interesting business that isn't property, oil, armaments, diamonds, drugs or slavery?" And so began his career in IT - and a switch to Aston Martins.

In 2002, he set up Braintree, a technology outfit that helped Russian firms "optimise databases". But databases too failed to ignite Gurianov. Drifting, he lit on artificial intelligence (AI). At last, here was a challenge fit for both intellect and wallet.

There are two types of AI: Weak and Strong. Weak AI is found in iPhones. Strong AI equates to human intelligence but is elusive. Via Braintree, Gurianov, now 47, claims he has plunged £20m into cracking Strong AI.

"We are ahead of our competitors," he says, a laid-back oligarch-in-exile in Chelsea, London. "Everyone is pessimistic about lifting AI above human intelligence. But I will soon launch the 'neuro-net', a cleverer, faster replication of the human brain, the first step to Strong AI. I have christened the project 'Sunny'."

Intelligence is the skill to

create knowledge. "Dogs are intelligent, but poor at creating new knowledge," says Gurianov. "Human beings alone can create new knowledge from old. Sunny will create new knowledge more efficiently."

"Once we have launched the neuro-net," says John Corry, Gurianov's CEO, "Braintree will split: one part will develop Sunny; the other, practical applications."

Such as? "Optimisation of data storage. There is too much information on the internet to manage; imagine how much more when AI gets going. Precisely. You can't. Data storage is key."

"I want a robot to launder

Human beings alone can create new knowledge from old

my shirt, repair my Aston Martin," says Gurianov. "I like alternative energy. AI will find how to create energy by splitting water molecules. If I can fuel my car on water, that would improve the environment." Gurianov envisages a "society of information beings" purposed in knowledge-discovery of infinite scope and universal application. "AI will open the door to a new era."

But ... won't AI enslave humanity? "Rubbish! Human beings need three things: survival, procreation and quality of life. AI has just one need: development of intelligence. AI's sole pleasure is increase in intelligence. We are close to a step when the world will be changed in a day. Is humanity ready?"

I climb because a mountain pulls you in. It draws you to it. Just like a drug. It really is like an addiction'

Tom Ballard



By Robert Chalmers

✉@Escartefigue777

"Why is it," poet John Cooper Clarke once asked, "that the mountaineer is celebrated as a hero, while the heroin user, [Cooper Clarke was addicted to the drug for over a decade] who risks his life on a daily basis, is universally derided?" Tom Ballard, sitting on the grass in a park in Verona, ponders the question.

It all depends, he says, on what you mean by the idea of the mountaineer. "On Everest," he explains, "some climbers are basically tourists. They have little expertise. What they have is money. They use oxygen. Sherpas carry their gear. In life, I believe in serving an apprenticeship."

No climber has served a more testing apprenticeship than the 26-year-old from Fort William in Scotland. In August 1995, his mother, Alison Hargreaves, died at the age of 33 during her descent from K2, the Himalayan peak that is 780ft lower than Everest but considerably more perilous. Hargreaves had climbed

Everest alone, without oxygen, and scaled the "Big Six" Alpine peaks in a single spring season. This year, Tom became the first climber to replicate that achievement in a single winter.

He now lives with his father, Jim, on a campsite in the Dolomites, 120 miles north of here. The pair own a van but no permanent home.

Ballard's most dangerous challenge remains unfulfilled. "It has always been my dream," he says, "to stand on the top of K2."

What's stopping him?

"Money."

Three generations of the English racing motorist Malcolm Campbell's family attempted world speed records, including his son Donald, killed in 1967. Can children inherit an affinity for peril?

"No," Ballard says. "I grew up with mountains; first in Belper [his mother's home town in Derbyshire] then in Fort William. Up there, I feel totally at ease. It's down here," he adds, "that I feel uncomfortable." Down here is everything he doesn't enjoy. Traffic. Pollution. Inquisitive reporters.

"I'm regularly asked, 'What do you think about when you're climbing a mountain: your mother?' To which I say, 'No. Oddly enough I am thinking mainly about not falling off'."

Ballard is a likeable man: mentally sharp, with a dry sense of humour. Hargreaves was renowned for the swiftness of her ascents. Her son does

everything quickly: climbing, walking, eating, speaking. His manner suggests he would not allow prurient enquiries to go unpunished.

In 2010, David Rose and Ed Douglas published *Regions of the Heart*, a book which, drawing on Hargreaves' diaries, detailed her sometimes volatile relationship with Jim Ballard. Alison was 16 when they met. Twenty years her senior, he ran a climbing shop in Matlock. She moved in with him when she was 18, to the distress of her parents who were both Oxford University graduates. Her diaries refer to domestic abuse by Jim Ballard and to acute financial problems. Climbing seems to have been a welcome release.

Her body still lies in the snow, at 23,000ft.

"If it hadn't been for your mum," I ask, "would I be here?"

"No."

"Have you read *Regions of the Heart*?"

"Unfortunately."

"You live with your father, despite those diary entries."

"My grandparents released only some parts of her diaries. I don't think the authors got an overall view. My father emerges like Saddam Hussein. They needed someone to blame. It's hard," Ballard says, "to blame a mountain."

I tell him that I find it hard to imagine that he feels no sense of his mother's presence at altitude. "Our spiritual connection isn't related to the

mountains. I do believe that she is here with us right now, in spirit. I don't climb because of my mother. I climb because a mountain pulls you in. It draws you to it. Just like a drug. It really is like an addiction."

"But it's not a rush, like base-jumping?"

"No. I believe it's a combination of things: beauty, danger and a sense of achievement."

Hargreaves was posthumously castigated for attempting K2 when she had Tom and his younger sister, Kate to look after. Did he pound his pillow, reproaching her?

"No. Because I understood. I understood absolutely why she did what she did. I would prefer that she died doing something that was her passion."

We move to a café where he sees off a panini as though engaged in a speed-eating contest. He talks about sponsorship that might raise the £50,000 or so required to get him up K2.

If he does climb that mountain, I suggest, there will have to be a sense of having laid a ghost to rest.

"I won't know until I go. If I go," he says.

I have a horrible feeling that he may not die in bed.

"On the whole," he says, "I would rather not die in bed."

We say goodbye. I watch as Ballard leaves to catch his train back: walking briskly, impatient to associate the family name with some less calamitous form of immortality. **N**

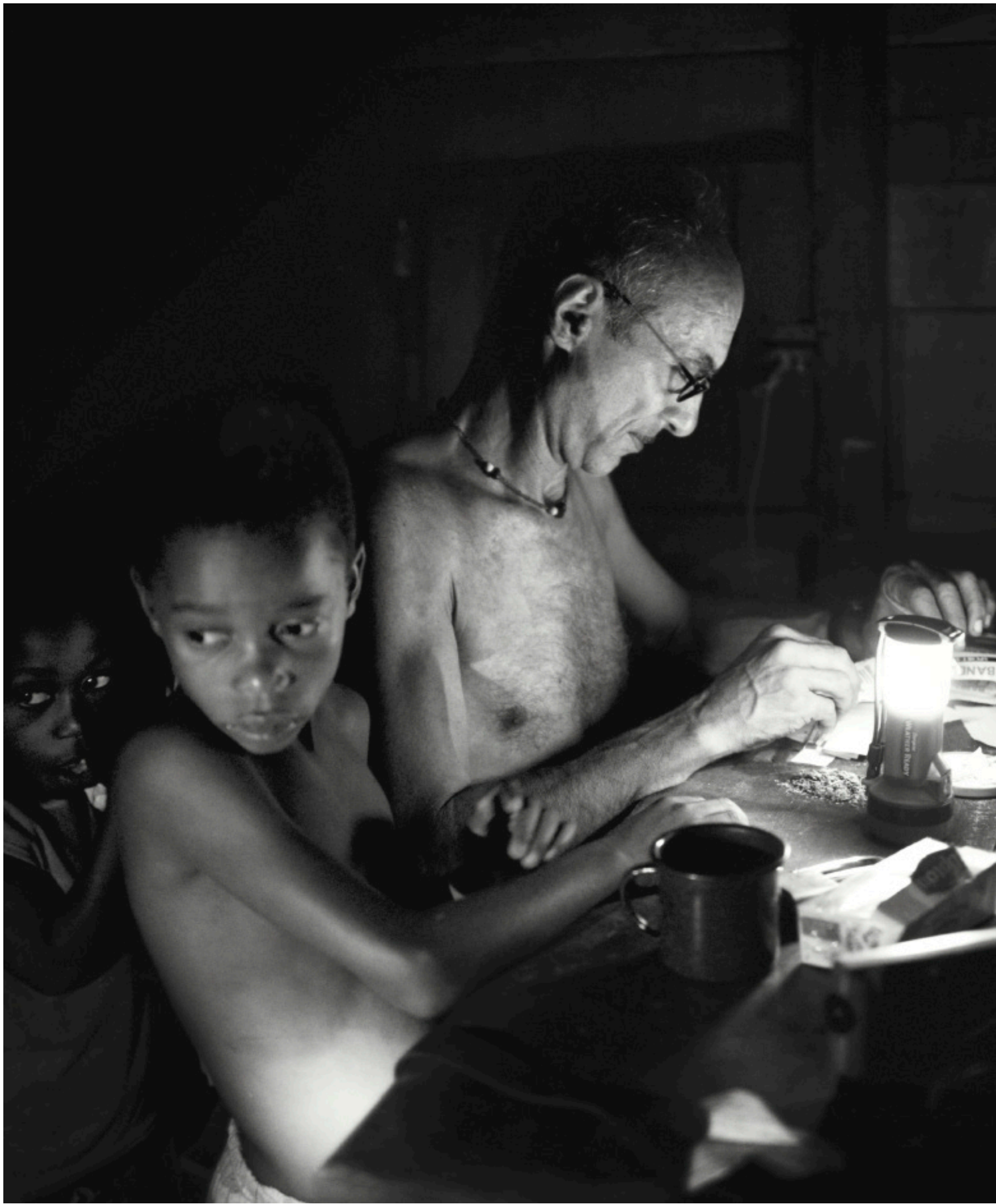




American Louis Sarno has lived with the pygmies of the central African rainforest for 30 years. His legacy is the world's most important archive of pygmy music. Howard Swains made the four-day journey to find his tiny village of Yandoumbé

**'THE PAST
DOESN'T EXIST
AND THAT'S GOOD.
YOU'RE MORE
ALIVE'**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATTHIAS ZIEGLER



1

HOUSE OF EARTH

There are two lines of poetry chalked along a beam in a simple, three-room house in the village of Yandoumbé in the Central African Republic:

*Here I lie in house of earth /
Waiting for an upper berth*

On any given night, at least five people lie within sight of that couplet - two on a low bed, beneath a tatty mosquito net, and, usually, three others on a naked foam mattress in the corner of a cement floor. Across the room there are two plastic tanks of water pumped from a nearby well and a couple of wooden chairs that tend to sit wherever they have been dragged by their latest occupants. The roof is made of palm fronds and many Westerners, if they saw the structure at all, would call the house a “hut” or a “shack”, even though it is the largest and most solid construction in the area.

During daytime, sunlight spears through hatches swung open in the walls, while at night the pitch darkness of the African rainforest is broken only by small fires smouldering to ruin outside, or a kerosene lamp and battery-powered torch-cum-lantern propped on a hand-made desk.

If one looks closely, the light might also catch some writing implements and pots of herbs and spices amid the clutter on the table, as well as a couple of book spines, including the *Oxford Dictionary of Music*, close at hand. There are some spectacles hanging from nails driven into the wall and a small set of speakers wired either to an MP3 player or a radio.

The lines of poetry on the wall above are often cast into shadow, but even if they were perfectly illuminated only one of the permanent residents of the house could read them, much less understand the sentiment they express.

Their author is Louis Sarno, born in New Jersey in the United States in 1954, whose native language is rarely spoken in the village he has made his home. Yandoumbé lies more than 500km from Bangui, capital of the Central African Republic, and about a mile along what passes for a road from Bayanga, the nearest town that might feature on a map of one of the poorest nations in the world: the Central African Republic ranked 142nd of 142 countries on the 2014 Global Prosperity Index.

Yandoumbé is surrounded by the dense rainforest of the Dzanga Ndoki National Park, put on the Unesco World Heritage List

in 2012 and not yet depleted entirely beyond function by the international logging market. It is clinging on despite widespread destruction in the region, and remains a haven of tropical flora and fauna, including forest elephants and critically endangered western lowland gorillas.

With the exception of Sarno, who is a wiry, 6ft-tall white man, each of some 600 residents of Yandoumbé are Ba’aka – or pygmies – a hunter-gatherer people indigenous to the Congo Basin. They include Sarno’s girlfriend, Agati, and the three children who occupy the foam mattress in his home.

Nearly 30 years ago, Sarno was a wanderer, living between Amsterdam and Scotland, when he first heard the polyphonic singing for which the Ba’aka have a reputation that travels far further than the rainforest canopy. He was lured to the music’s source clutching a microphone, a tape recorder and as many batteries and cassettes as he could carry. To all intents and purposes, he never came back.

Sarno has been described by some as the “white pygmy of Yandoumbé” or “Ba’aka Louis”; others have reached for the easy pejorative “Screwie Louis”. But to some musicologists, Sarno is regarded among the most significant sound recorders in the world, a man who has amassed a peerless aural document of some of the most sophisticated music produced by man.

He is in demand in Oxford, Berlin and New York, and sometimes bows to the callings of academics or film promoters, making the four-day journey away from his home to some of the world’s most prestigious institutions. Earlier this month, he took that journey once more and headed to the east coast of the US, where a new documentary about him, *Song From The Forest*, received its general release. He caught up with old friends, had health checks and attended interviews, in support of both the film and the re-release of a memoir he wrote in the early 1990s. But, as usual, his mind was never far from Africa.

Day to day, Sarno fills the role of village doctor, schoolteacher, advocate, interpreter, archivist, writer and fixer. Although his reasons for visiting, staying and eventually settling in Yandoumbé have shifted throughout the years, they are now principally to be found sleeping on those two beds in his simple house. Sarno is a doting husband and father, whose home has become a refuge to many.

Sarno will also, he concedes, most likely be elevated to his upper berth from this modest dwelling. He is 60 years old in a village where life expectancy is barely 40. What he describes as his “beloved Centrafrique” is gripped by a bloody civil war that has, by conservative estimates, already cost around 3,000 lives and forced

At home: Louis Sarno lives with his Ba’aka wife and his son, Samedi, pictured centre

more than 400,000 people from their homes. In the past two years, it has meant that Sarno, too, has been a refugee, fleeing against his will to the US, as well as finding himself a reluctant mediator between his people and the generals of the lawless forces who have plunged the Central African Republic into its crisis. Sarno has found flattery and massaging of would-be warlords' egos to be an effective strategy in preventing them murdering his family.

I first met Sarno in Oxford in April 2014. He was the guest of the Pitt Rivers Museum, the institution at which his extraordinary collection of field recordings has created a buzz among ethnomusicologists. Over the past 10 years, the Sarno collection of more than 1,400 hours of music and soundscapes from the Congo Basin has been digitised at the museum, offering future generations an unprecedented sonic insight into a bewitching musical world.

We also spoke in London, where Sarno was recuperating after a major health scare that required emergency surgery, and then months later in Berlin, where he had travelled to promote *Song From the Forest's* German release. I accompanied Sarno on the tortuous journey back to Yandoumbé from Europe, during which he shared the countless tales and boundless knowledge accrued during his remarkable life.

Sarno shies away from portrayal as a sage. He is uncomfortable with being depicted as dispensing worldly wisdom from a lofty moral perch beneath the rainforest canopy. But he has managed to make real what for so many disillusioned Westerners is only an idle dream: switching off, dropping out and creating a life immersed in one of the world's natural paradises, surrounded by exceptional music and song. Almost everybody I talked with about Sarno, across three continents and countless walks of life, used the same phrase to describe him. "He's the real deal," they said.

2

NEW JERSEY TO AFRICA

Louis Sarno has described many times what led him to the rainforest, including in a tight précis at the start of his 1993 memoir *Song From The Forest - My Life Among The Ba-Benjellé Pygmies*. "I was drawn to the heart of Africa by a song," the book begins. The author's photograph in the first American edition shows Sarno inside a mud hut, headphones over his ears, fiddling with some recording equipment and flanked by three athletic African men.

Although this memoir is due to be re-released this year amid the flurry of recent interest in Sarno, he disowned it for many years, citing the clichés it

peddles about African adventure. He says that the book's young author, a fresh arrival to the rainforest, with black hair, bushy eyebrows and a keen glint in his eyes, knew almost nothing of the world he professed to describe.

Sarno is equally dismissive these days of his life before the point that it swerved towards Africa. It followed an unremarkable path from suburban New Jersey through unhappy college years and eventually to Europe, until the chance encounter with pygmy music prompted an epiphanic awakening and sent him even further from his childhood home.

Sarno was born to a second-generation Italian immigrant family in Newark in 1954 and enjoyed what he describes as a regular upbringing of "back yards and front lawns". His father was a high school maths teacher, and Sarno has two brothers and one sister. "We could climb over fences and go in each others' back yards," he says. "We had a whole neighbourhood to play in. I used to think of these little patches of woods as 'the jungle'. It probably inspired me. It partly inspired my liking the rainforest."

After graduating from high school, Sarno spent a year at Northwestern University in Chicago, where he first became friends with a young journalism student and future film-maker, Jim Jarmusch. But as Jarmusch neglected his journalism studies in favour of poetry and Sarno grew disillusioned with life in the Midwest, the pair soon transferred back to the East Coast and became immersed in the burgeoning avant-garde art scene in Manhattan and beyond.

Jarmusch found a home in the English department at Columbia University, while Sarno enrolled at Rutgers, the state university of New Jersey.

Sarno also continued to grow a vast collection of classical music, which had been a passion since his youth, with a particular focus on the polyphonic singing of the Renaissance. Despite spending as much time in the city as he did on the college's New Brunswick campus, he eventually left Rutgers with a degree in English. He then spent three years in a post-graduate comparative literature programme at the University of Iowa.

Sarno met Wanda Boeke, a Dutch-American woman who became his first wife. The couple moved to Amsterdam, where Sarno worked in a succession of odd jobs, and he also accompanied Boeke on her regular trips to visit family and friends in Scotland. "I got to know this group of eccentrics up in Scotland, who had done all these travels," Sarno says. "They had gone to Afghanistan in 1960. It was a different world back then. Back then, I thought of Afghanistan as a place where they had the most amazing crafts ... That's what Afghanistan used to mean to me - and the music. I had a couple of records of traditional music from Afghanistan, wonderful music too."

Having abandoned his collection of classical music in the United States, Sarno says he didn't have the heart to start building another in Europe. Instead, he found himself listening to the radio one day when he encountered a song that originated in Africa. "It just shot me off in a



Remote: Ba'aka territory spans the border between the Central African Republic and DRC



He has managed to make real what for so many disillusioned Westerners is only an idle dream: switching off, dropping out and creating a life immersed in one of the world's natural paradises'

different direction," he says. "In the end it was the music of the pygmies that really attracted me, not just because of the music, but because of the environment. I found over a couple of years I got every available recording of pygmy music, even stuff that was out of print. I've always liked forests and I figured I had to go and make my own recordings. It became an obsession.

I would go because I had all the music and I wanted more. It wasn't enough for me."

When his friends from Scotland next visited Africa, Sarno accompanied them with a loose plan to navigate from Tangier to the central African rainforest, recording music along the way. His first two attempts at finding the source of the pygmy music failed, but Sarno remained committed to the task. "Eventually I just picked the capital that was closest to the rainforest, which was Bangui, and I flew there," Sarno says.

Other aspirations, including to become a science fiction writer, were pushed aside. He also separated from his wife. He says he never expected that he would not remain in the rainforest permanently, but adds: "I did kind of have this vision of me living with the Ba'aka, with some group of pygmies. I did have a flash, when I first got a record out from the library and was listening to it, I had this kind of flash that I was going to be with them, living with them."

Jarmusch, who remains a close friend, says, "He's not someone who was going to find a job in an accounting firm or anything, and that was obvious from the first time that I met him."

3

THE GLOW OF LITTLE FIRES

One of Louis Sarno's earliest, aborted trips to Africa foundered when he was denied passage across what is now South Sudan by the outbreak of the second Sudanese war in 1983. The frustrations of the naïve young traveller, denied the opportunity to travel up the Nile into the Ituri rainforest, prefigured almost all more recent attempts

to cross northern and central Africa, as a series of conflicts have brought vast swathes of the continent to its knees.

Last time Sarno made the journey home to the Central African Republic, it was with his eldest son, Samedi. They were coming home from Germany, where he had been touring to promote the documentary *Song From the Forest*, which takes its name from Sarno's memoir, is directed by the German journalist Michael Obert and is framed around Samedi's first trip out of Africa in 2011, when he was 13, to visit his father's former life in New York.

After a drawn-out post-production process, the film had its premiere in Berlin in late summer of 2014 and Sarno and his son had been the guests of honour. The film was also shown at film festivals in London and New York in autumn and had its general release in the United States in early April.

I met Sarno and Samedi at Ataturk Airport in Istanbul, finding them close to the boarding gate for a flight to Yaounde, the charmless capital of Cameroon. Overland travel out of Bangui is now impossible and the safest route towards Yandoumbé, Sarno's tiny village close to Bayanga, demands a drive along the solitary road crossing Cameroon's southern districts. The Foreign Office is unequivocal in its advice against all travel to the Central African Republic but the Dzanga-Sanga National Reserve, which occupies the far south-western corner of the country, flanked by Congo-Brazzaville and Cameroon, has avoided the very worst of the bloodshed.

For Sarno and Samedi, of course, their reason for travel was simple and non-negotiable: after three weeks on the road, they were finally going home. Samedi looks younger than his 16 years. He was wearing a grey, long-sleeved T-shirt, blue jeans and blue-grey sneakers when we met at the airport and nobody in the departure lounge could have identified him as a pygmy, particularly when accompanied by his father. Sarno is tall and lean and at times can also pass for younger than 60 despite hair now reduced to grey wisps, and weary eyes. He wears a thin moustache along his top lip and props spectacles on his nose to read. He alternates seamlessly between what remains recognisable an accent from the East Coast of the United States and Yaka, the dialect of the pygmies, which is not recognisable at all to Western ears.

A seven-hour flight to Cameroon was the easy part of a four-day trip. After a night in a grotty hotel in Yaounde, Sarno and Samedi had to pay a visit to the German consulate to confirm Samedi's return to the country. Sarno adopted Samedi after the boy's natural father was gored by a bongo, a rare but dangerous antelope indigenous to central Africa, in the kind of accident that can be a daily hazard in the rainforest.

Sarno was in a long relationship with Samedi's mother, Gouma, and is named as Samedi's father on his birth certificate, obtained for the first time when Obert's film took them to the United States.

Eventually, after a swift visit to the market so that Samedi could buy a football, we hit the road east in the direction of the town of Bertoua. The roads in southern Cameroon, particularly east of Bertoua, exist only to service the lumber industry that tears away approximately 1,800 square kilometres of rainforest per year. Small villages have grown up alongside the road, but the men sitting beneath communal shades and the women crouched over cooking pots or scrubbing laundry in creeks seem of secondary concern to the never-ending convoy of trucks trundling metres from their homes. Each typically carries three enormous trunks of African mahogany, roughly 30ft long and six feet in diameter, towards Douala, Cameroon's western seaport. Groups of young children, who sometimes wander in hand-holding chain-gangs along the road, barely notice as the monstrous vehicles terrorise past, their insatiable demand for tropical hardwood carrying away the region's future prosperity.

Although Sarno's location has been remote for 30 years, he is not a recluse. In the past few years he has travelled away from his home more frequently than during any other period: to the United States for filming *Song From the Forest*, twice to Oxford to work on his collection of recordings, then back to Germany for the film's first promotional tour. He also fled the Central African Republic during the worst of the troubles in early 2013.

As we were stopped and harassed at checkpoint after checkpoint, Sarno talked about some of the methods by which he used to bribe his passage past the similarly corrupt road guards of the Central African Republic - a gift of a magazine or newspaper often enough to see his through. This time around, with the region jittery owing to the war, there was the feeling of having entered a different era. The guards seized on any perceived infractions in our paperwork - I had to cough up 10,000 Central African Francs (about €18) as a bribe because of the absence of proof of a polio vaccine on my medical forms - and Sarno was taken aback by a guard near the border's plaintive appeal: "Didn't you remember anything for me from your trip?" Sarno explained that his priorities were with his family, but parted with a soundtrack CD from *Song From The Forest*, a few copies of which he was bringing home for personal use.

Worse was due to come. We had heard along the road that the border patrol officer in Libouma, on the Cameroon side of the

Sangha River, who would need to stamp our passports to allow passage to the Central African Republic, had recently been fired for punching a white man.

As we trundled into Libongo, however, Sarno's mood brightened. We pulled up at a shop owned by a Mauritanian friend and Sarno immediately saw that his current girlfriend Agati, with whom he has been in a relationship for three years, had come over the river and waited in the shop to meet us. We went through the formalities with the new border patrol officer with a minimum of fuss (nobody was punched) and, as dusk began to fall, stepped into a long, narrow pirogue that would ferry us to the real rainforest.

The first rain of the day arrived as we made our way across the water. The gods of travelogue cliché also delivered a rainbow stretching above the wall of forest on the eastern banks of the river. Another canoe appeared alongside us, paddled by a fisherman wearing an orange T-shirt and with a cigarette hanging from his bottom lip. He offered us two limp creatures; perhaps the last of his haul from the day, or its total. Suddenly, though, he halted the sales pitch to bellow: "Monsieur Louis!"

Sarno transformed miraculously from grouchy traveller to effusive tour guide. He said proudly that the Central African Republic has the least light pollution of any country in the world. "When you fly over, it's like the paleolithic era," he said. "Almost no electric lights, just the glow of little fires."

Darkness fell as we clambered from the boat, and Sarno shook hands with four bored guards from the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (Faca), shotguns resting across their knees. Their presence, though apparently unthreatening, had been enough to keep from the region the brutal but disorganised anti-balaka militia, the second wave of lawless fighters responsible for the country's ongoing civil war. Sarno expressed his gratitude by handing over a couple of banknotes: the first guards not to try to extract money were rewarded for their restraint. We then squeezed into another 4x4 for the final three hours of our trip: a lurch through deep puddles (it was the rainy season) and with undergrowth whipping either side of our vehicle. The headlights flickered out at every puddle, but remarkably our driver kept us gradually inching forward.

We stopped at what I later discovered was a Ba'aka village so that Sarno could buy a bundle of marijuana from a friend - all Ba'aka smoke prodigious amounts, and Sarno is a keen consumer - and eventually arrived in pitch darkness of Yandoumbé. Sarno, Samedi and Agati hauled their bags and suitcases from the boot, lit only by a couple of hand-held torches and some distant fires. But it was obvious we were

now surrounded by an excited and populous welcoming committee, who swept their returning friend into his home.

I was due to be staying at a lodge around nine kilometres away, but our car's engine had apparently run out of miracles and now threatened to leave me stranded short of the finishing line. After seven or eight unsuccessful attempts to get us started again, we could gradually feel ourselves being shoved backwards out of our rut.

Eventually, the engine caught and its diesel growl was accompanied by a chorus of delighted cheers. The headlights also came on for the first time since we had stalled, suddenly illuminating at least 30 triumphant faces crowded in front of us. We were deep among the forest people.

4

THE FOREST SPIRIT DANCES

Pygmy populations have existed in Africa for tens of thousands of years. The term itself - defined in *Chambers* as "a member of one of the unusually short peoples of equatorial Africa" - has occasionally been blighted by pejorative, colonialist usage, but it is the only appropriate coverall used by anthropologists to describe numerous indigenous peoples. Pygmies are typically slightly less than five feet tall and are semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers, who live in or around a rainforest.

It is all but impossible to determine Ba'aka population numbers, with the most durable estimate being around 30,000. Their protein comes from the animals they can trap in the nets they weave from strips of liana bark, else spear from the trees - antelope, porcupine, monkey. Their staple starch comes from manioc (or cassava), traditionally obtained by trading the treasures of the forest with the Sangha-Sangha, the fisher-people who live by the imposing, life-giving Sangha River.

Despite prospering in this manner since the beginning of civilisation, however, the delicateness of the lifestyle has been made chillingly apparent by the encroachment of the lumber industry during the late 20th century. The international bush-meat industry regards the rainforest as a self-replenishing larder, yet the logging companies have reduced its size so dramatically in the past 50 years that it can now barely support those people most dependent upon it, let alone outsiders.

After a day recuperating from the exertions of our journey across Cameroon, I took a 40-minute ride on a motorcycle taxi from my base at Sangha Lodge, the only viable accommodation option in the area, to visit Sarno's home in Yandoumbé in

'I loved the rainforest and I ended up just loving being with the Ba'aka. I was just looking for a life that I would enjoy, and I found it'

daylight. I arrived to find him in conference with an ailing old widower who, Sarno explained, had recently lost the second of his two daughters to illness and was reduced to climbing trees to pick nuts to sell. He was looking for financial assistance from the world traveller, but Sarno had already parted with all of the money - approximately €600, from sales of CDs at film screenings - he had brought back from Europe, paying off debts run up by his family during his absence. At Sarno's request, I handed over 2,000 Central African Francs (about €3) to the man, who departed leaning heavily on tall splinter from a tree trunk he was using as a crutch.

Sarno's house, made of wood scavenged from the now-abandoned lumber mill in Bayanga, sits at one end of a clearing, around which are scattered eight or nine low dwellings occupied by other Ba'aka families. The village has three of four such clusters of housing (it is constantly in flux), either side of a typically uneven track. When Sarno first arrived to the Central African Republic, the community of Ba'aka who would eventually become his close friends lived closer to Bayanga, where they were frequently bothered by the Bantu. But Sarno secured permission for a plot about three kilometres away and encouraged the founding of what is now Yandoumbé, named after the stream that runs behind the village.

After receiving a windfall from the production of the first film made about his life - 2010's *OKA!*, directed by Lavinia Currier - Sarno was able to make their presence more secure. Sarno himself had to move in first to encourage the other Ba'aka to leave their former home, but they gradually joined him and built new houses close to his. "The community already existed, I just changed the location," Sarno says. "I didn't really found the village. After three nights, the Ba'aka started coming because they knew it was a better place, in every way. Back then, there was forest all around, it was beautiful." Now, at close to 600 residents, Yandoumbé is probably the largest pygmy village in the region.

Sarno's first two trips to central Africa lasted three months each, the maximum permitted by the tourist visas he could obtain from the government in Bangui and

by rapidly diminishing finances. He slept outside on the ground on the first night he arrived but was gradually accepted by the community as he became ever more accustomed to their ways of life. As the Ba'aka began to acknowledge he was in no hurry to leave, they helped him build a house and gradually embraced his presence. "They are very tolerant people," Sarno says.

Back in New York during an enforced break from his new life, a literary agent read a brief essay he had written about his time in the rainforest, and secured a commission for a full-length book. Sarno successfully negotiated with the publisher for an advance and then with the consulate for a longer permit to remain. He purchased a one-way ticket back to Africa. "I just felt at home," Sarno says. "The Ba'aka were happy to see me because they knew me already and they knew I liked the music. And then I fell in love with this Ba'aka girl and the idea of leaving was not something I could contemplate. That's what drew me deeper into the culture, that's how I started learning the language, and going into the forest with them and staying in forest camps for two or three months at a time. The only language I would hear would be their language."

Traditional life for the Ba'aka exists in two distinct locales. For at least half of the year they live in the village where they are in easy reach of the manioc plantations, shops and neighbours of Bayanga. But at other times, for periods of up to three months, groups from the village up sticks and roam into the forest, vanishing deep into the jungle on extended hunting expeditions, which are also filled with revelry.

Sarno grew quickly accustomed to carrying his recording equipment wherever he went. He knew immediately that he was seeking more from his recording project than merely the tourist performances that the Ba'aka could sometimes be persuaded to put on in the village. While hunting, groups of 50 or more singers combine in polyphonic chorus: several vocal strands are stacked atop one another to produce densely layered songs. While loitering in camp, they entertain themselves with harp playing and flute music. Even while bathing in rivers, they are capable of beating out rhythms on the water that magically come together to form coherent compositions.

Nothing is quite as spectacular as the ceremonies of benediction, however, where Ba'aka who are properly initiated dance and sing in masks and costumes fashioned according to ancient and complex tradition. The ceremonies can last hours on end and deep into the night, among them bojobe, during which a choir of women singers plead the spirits for their blessing ahead of a hunt; linboku, a women's ceremony to

which men are not permitted; and ejengi, the biggest celebration of them all, which can last several months.

As we talked, Sarno and I ambled up to a gazebo in his garden, among trees bearing jackfruit, breadfruit and avocado, and others, in a splendidly peaceful glade. The darkened rainforest surrounds the house on three sides, and small parties of Ba'aka, typically women, wandered to and fro, clutching handfuls of mushrooms and forest garlic and baskets of manioc.

We occupied the two wooden chairs on a slightly raised platform, while a group of Ba'aka, who had accompanied my motorcycle taxi from the moment it arrived, assembled themselves around us, some sitting on the floor, others standing propped against the wooden pillars. The children tumbled up and down the slight, grassy hill and became entangled in play-fights. The wooden table, on which Sarno likes to write, rapidly became a jewellery display, with scores of necklaces and bracelets, all made by the Ba'aka from beads and dried vines and carved wood, offered for my delectation. A neighbour named Mkouti sat at Sarno's feet, resting his head against the chair, and began plucking at a geedal, a six-string bow-harp. Its sound was mesmeric, especially when accompanied by Mkouti's mumbling vocals.

"I wasn't searching for a simple life," Sarno admitted. "I was just coming here to record music. I loved the rainforest and I ended up just loving being with the Ba'aka. I was just looking for a life that I would enjoy, and I found it."

It began to rain, and the heavy drops beat a refrain on the roof and coated the tumbling, naked children in a wet shimmer. They looked as if they had been basted head to toe for the oven. After about an hour, Sarno wandered back down to the house to meet Agati, who had returned from a shopping trip to Bayanga, and I was left in the shelter in between the 15 or 20 villagers who had sat with us, mainly young men chatting among themselves. They were dressed in a raggedy assortment of sports jerseys and T-shirts bearing other slogans, above cargo shorts or jeans that were either turned up or cut off.

Mkouti, who now took Sarno's seat, continued to play his harp and was joined by another young man wearing a Nigeria football shirt and with a Turkish Airlines luggage tag clipped to his belt loop. Either Sarno or Samedi had provided the gift, which had little function beyond that of incongruous decoration. (He also had no affiliation to the Nigeria football team.) The new arrival began drumming with a stick on to the back of the chair, which in turn prompted another boy to join the band, cupping his hands to produce an echo-like clap. A bowl of roasted manioc

arrived, from which a couple of the youngest children feasted, swelling further their rotund bellies. When it was empty, the bowl became another instrument: a new musician tapped against its sides with the metal spoon. Soon enough, but also somehow imperceptibly, the orchestra had swelled to six or seven, with five voices and whistles.

I first noticed something else afoot when three women arrived and crowded the harp player, clapping and singing and dancing with an elastic swivel of the hips. They plunged forward from the waist, then shimmied their way vertical again, their shoulders rolling from side to side. The new voices increased the volume and the activity grew more frenetic. I also noticed Samedi for the first time since arriving that day, among a clutch of teenagers who had previously been horsing around beside Sarno's house. The teenagers swelled the group around the summer-house and were armed with vegetation, long, leafy branches, with which they were busy beating the undergrowth that led towards Sarno's orchard of avocado trees. Pretty soon, with the teenagers now also hollering into the bushes, I made out what looked like a short, green shrub quivering of its own volition in the undergrowth. It was somehow also edging nearer to where the teenagers were slapping the trees: a figure from the forest, made of the forest, was approaching.

The figure was comprised entirely of green - top to bottom sheathed in leaves, glistening in the rain. It was about four to five feet tall, but no human skin was visible. As it stomped into view, the music grew ever louder and the activity more frenzied. It even dared at one point to step up on to the terrace, which prompted an explosion of what appeared to be either terror or jubilation. It was whipped with branches and gradually retreated back whence it came. The forest spirit had danced.

These spirit dances - of which the performance I witnessed was extremely basic - are the subject of countless anthropological studies, and arguably no Westerner has seen as many as Sarno. Yet despite his presence at hundreds of ceremonies over the years, Sarno keeps details of his own initiations close to his chest, leading many to assume he has never played an active role.

Anthropologists, who typically stay in the field for a year or 18 months, consider initiation to be a crucial component of their studies; cultures can only be properly understood from within, and only through initiation can one peer behind the scenes.

Sarno told me that he had, in fact, been initiated in both ejengi and bojobe, but prefers to keep it more or less secret. After the spirit danced in Yandoumbé, I handed

6,000 Central African Francs (about £9) in small notes to Sarno and asked if he could figure out a way to share it around the dancers and musicians in a commensurate way. We made a play of showing me hand over the notes so the musicians would know its source, but Sarno withheld 1,000 Francs, in what he said was a lesson to his friends that their ceaseless pleading would not always yield such immediate gains. Mkouti, the harpist, made at least three subsequent plays for the money, all of which were rebuffed, and I heard the phrase “mil Franc” in countless subsequent conversations as other Ba’aka dropped by.

The banknote’s presence in Sarno’s pocket had become the focus of keen attention. But soon it was gone: Sarno handed it to a carpenter he had commissioned to mend a hole in his fence with a hammer he had brought back from Germany. He had not been exaggerating about having spent all his money, and my dwindling supply of local currency was much in demand.

The notion of life in the rainforest being separate from the toils of economics is now sadly much outdated. The bartering arrangements between indigenous peoples are a thing of the distant past. During the 1990s, the lumber mill in Bayanga, operated by a Yugoslav logging company, offered employment to around 370 people, mostly Bantu, and for a short period the area was relatively prosperous. The mill was a huge and unpopular drain on precarious natural resources, and was closed before it could cause irreparable damage to what remains the world’s second-largest uninterrupted rainforest.

Although the World Wildlife Fund attempts to limit hunting, and has

designated areas of the park into which unauthorised visitors are not permitted, poaching has depleted the forest’s stock of small mammals, part of the Ba’aka’s staple diet, to near critical levels.

Sarno, like any father, needs to provide for his family. Although family groups tend to be more flexible among the Ba’aka, and children will often choose the adult with whom they most wish to live, Sarno is the “official” father of both Samedi, 16, and Yambi, 12, who are brothers and whose father was killed when they were young. Their mother, Gouma, still lives in the village and her daughter, Mamalay, whose father is still alive, is also a regular visitor to Sarno’s home for food and affection. Sarno’s girlfriend Agati also has a six-year-old son, Mosio, who lives in the family home. Sarno has also cared for Gouma’s brother since their mother died when he was an infant. The shy child could only be lulled to sleep in Sarno’s arms. That boy now has children of his own, including another Samedi, and Sarno provides whatever support he can. “I love them in a way I would love my own child,” he says. “I would give my life for any of these children, there’s no question about that. They’re the most important thing to me.”

Much to the dismay of many of Sarno’s Western friends, conversations back home about his presence in the forest often veer into deeply personal territory. Questions typically whispered from behind a hand are obsessed with his relationships with Ba’aka women. Sarno told me that he has never wanted to be the biological father of any children and that he finds the prurient interest in his sex life to be both baffling and intrusive. He has been in a hardly-extraordinary tally of three relationships

over 30 years – his first pygmy love, who now lives in another village; Samedi’s mother Gouma, to whom he was attached for six years; and Agati – with long, unattached spells in between.

5

THE TAPES IN THE SUITCASE

My introduction to Sarno came from an old university friend named Noel Lobley, who is now a leading ethnomusicologist and in charge of the sound collections at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford. In 2012, Lobley told me that he had been working on a hoard of ethnographic field recordings he had unearthed in a museum store cupboard and tipped me off that the recorder of what he described as some of the most sophisticated music in the world was still alive and living in the rainforest. Lobley, who is now a close friend of Sarno’s, is also mystified by the interest in anything about him beyond his life’s work. “To me, it’s all about the music,” Lobley says.

The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford is one of the city’s most treasured institutions. Founded in 1884 to house the private collection of the pioneering archaeologist and ethnologist Augustus Pitt Rivers, its rows of wood-framed glass cabinets now contain some 500,000 curios from all corners of the globe. There are tribal masks, costumes, musical instruments, ceramics and weaponry, as well as a notorious collection of shrunken human heads from Ecuador and Peru, which are a principal attraction but the bane of the museum staff’s lives.

Louis Sarno’s influence at the Pitt Rivers is, for the most part, out of the public’s view. Cassette tapes don’t offer much to look at. But Dr Lobley, who is in charge of the museum’s sound archives, believes the aural document from the Central African Republic and Congo is among the most valuable items the museum holds. “That’s the flagship [sound] collection,” Lobley says. “It’s the one that draws attention to everything else.”

In the mid-1980s, Sarno approached Oxford university for funding for his then-embryonic project among the pygmy musicians of the Congo Basin and struck up a friendly relationship with Dr Hélène La Rue, Lobley’s predecessor. La Rue was a keen supporter of trailblazing talents and recognised in Sarno the potential for a direct conduit to some of the world’s most sought-after musicianship. The funds were secured and La Rue offered the university as a safe repository for what became a rapidly expanding collection.

Lobley insists that Sarno belongs in the same category as the great collectors Alan

Who are the Ba’aka?

The honeycomb plunderers

The Ba’aka (a local rendering of the more widespread “Baka”) are semi-nomadic hunter gatherers, believed to be the oldest inhabitants of the forest regions of the Congo Basin. As befits a group whose name can be literally translated as “forest people”, they seem at times almost supernaturally in tune with their habitat.

Ba’aka can instinctively navigate vast areas, recognising animal tracks or foliage patterns, and have an innate knowledge of which fruits or berries to eat and from which to distil poison for weaponry or extract for medicine. They are expert house-builders, fashioning characteristic “beehive” shelters from branches that are still sometimes living, and can climb trees with extraordinary

balance and speed, returning to share the gooey sweetness of honeycombs plundered from the canopy.

Ba’aka have long been exposed to abuse from their Bantu neighbours, who have often “owned” them as slaves, but the new outsiders’ pollutants – chiefly a cash economy and guns – present manifold new issues. Pygmy groups across different regions in Africa may encounter problems specific to their area, but all are threatened by the same three factors: other settlers, poaching and deforestation. “If you don’t have your own environment, you can’t live, so you can’t be a pygmy,” says Camille Oloa Bilou, of the Hunter Gather Resilience project at the University of London.

I don't want the Ba'aka to disappear without a trace. All this music, if it's on the internet, it will give them an input into the future

Lomax and Hugh Tracey, the field recorders who respectively mapped the sonic landscapes of the American south and much of sub-Saharan Africa, through much of the 20th century. Sarno's methods were slightly less formal: he is the only one of the three with no institutional backing nor any realistic expectation that his work might be considered to be of academic merit.

Sarno himself says: "It sort of mounted up very slowly over the years. It kind of amazes me to look at it now that there's so much, so many recordings. It is kind of a lifetime's work, so I guess it's not that surprising. But I never set out to do this, that wasn't my goal to make some kind of huge collection."

Lobley and Sarno gradually began to communicate with one another via email and eventually Lobley secured funding for Sarno to spend a month in Oxford in spring 2012, where the pair set about processing the trove of tapes. They expanded the perfunctory notes Sarno had made at the time of recordings and also analysed photographs to identify musicians and singers. During the latter part of his visit, a new cache of tapes arrived: some 400 hours of recordings from an expedition to northern Congo, which had been stashed beneath a bed in the spare room of Sarno's mother's house in New Jersey. "They're an important piece of the jigsaw," Lobley says.

Even for the uninitiated, listening to some of Sarno's recordings is an exhilarating, transportive experience. For Ba'aka, music is the lifeblood of the community and central to it; some studies have suggested that the music's balance between rigour and freedom "reflects perfectly the social organisation of the pygmies ... perhaps not by chance." Even Unesco has recognised the significance of Ba'aka music and in 2008 inscribed the polyphonic singing of the pygmies of Central Africa on its "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity". In the pop sphere, Herbie Hancock and Madonna are among those either to sample or attest influence from pygmy music, while Belgian artist Zap Mama "mixes African vocal techniques with European polyphony" in successful commercial releases.

Sarno has amassed recordings of startling authenticity. As any journalist,

anthropologist, film-maker or sound recorder will know, the presence of a third party, and in particular his or her Dictaphone, notebook, camera or microphone, will prompt changes in a subject's behaviour or output, even perhaps subconsciously. It is particularly marked when recording musicians, who may abandon their freewheeling spontaneity in favour of more formal, practised and safer ground. But Sarno's immersion with the Ba'aka afforded him the great privilege of being ignored entirely. At times, particularly during hunts in the forest, where singers can be stretched across many miles, his microphones were probably unseen by the people he was recording. It is a position that to some anthropologists transgresses an ethical boundary, but which has given Sarno's collection extraordinary value.

The vast majority of Sarno's recordings are now digitised and catalogued, ensuring their continued availability to students and researchers, as well as the general public, who can find large sections of the music on the museum's website. Lobley has used the recordings as the soundtrack to events at the museum and says he is in the early stages of planning another collaboration with the Oxford Contemporary Music Orchestra this year, in which high-profile artists will be offered access to the collection and invited to interpret it as they wish.

"I love the Ba'aka and I don't want them to just disappear without a trace," Sarno says. "With all this music, if it's in the sound cloud and it's on the internet, it becomes accessible. It will give them an input into the future and that makes me happy. I'm really glad about that."

6

WRESTLING THE HUNTERS

Through his recent work at the Pitt Rivers Museum - the essential admin concomitant with his recording in the field - Louis Sarno has secured the Ba'aka of his village a place in musical history. But having watched close friends and children die of preventable illness, and seen the habitat in which the Ba'aka have thrived for centuries eroded over recent years, Sarno's more pressing concerns centre on the precarious immediate health and livelihood of his friends and family.

In 2009, a malaria epidemic swept through the Ba'aka communities close to Bayanga, claiming the lives of dozens of children in less than two months. The Ba'aka have no natural immunity to the various mutations of the disease and it is the single biggest killer of pygmies across Africa. Sarno improved water supplies and latrine facilities when he helped to remodel

Yandoumbé, combating water-based disease, but malaria control (and defence against tuberculosis, which also kills generations of Ba'aka) demands medicine most likely manufactured in the West. Sarno now has a suitcase of pharmaceuticals in his house, from which he dispenses life-saving drugs. As he has gradually schooled the Ba'aka in the importance of preventative medicine, there is a constant stream of visitors at his door.

"Louis Sarno plays an important role in the fight against malaria," Julia Samuel, the operational director of the Drive Against Malaria (DAM) Foundation, tells me in an email. (Samuel and her team are working in Cameroon to try to stop Ebola entering the county.)

Samuel says the foundation first encountered Sarno after the 2009 epidemic and she forwards to me an official document in which Sarno is named as the figure around which the programme in the Central African Republic revolves. The DAM document offers a chilling assessment of how dangerous malaria is in the region, and how vital Sarno's work in Yandoumbé is considered. "If there is no swift action, there is a good chance that within a year malaria will again cause mass deaths among the children of Yandoumbé, and at worst will destroy the whole population." At time of writing, the Ebola epidemic that began in the summer of 2014 has not made its way to the Central African Republic, but the mere mention of the disease's name terrifies the Ba'aka.

Sarno rarely has disposable income, and does not receive payment for his unofficial role as village pharmacist. Instead, throughout his time living in Yandoumbé, he has found various inconsistent means of scratching together money, including as a fixer for the succession of film crews that have recorded footage in the rainforest. Over the same period of time, some Ba'aka have been able to find work with the WWF, for whom their jungle skills are enormously valuable. On the Dzanga Sangha Reserve, for example, their tracking skills are greatly valued by the WWF's unique gorilla habituation programme.

Rod Cassidy, an ornithologist and the proprietor of Sangha Lodge near Bayanga, has also worked with Sarno in offering tourists the opportunity to sample time in the forest with the Ba'aka.

"I believe, in my heart, that if people had seen the value of the Ba'aka culture in the 1980s or the 1970s, they could have turned this place into an exclusive Ba'aka hunting ground, and allowed tourists in here, and it would have been the biggest wildlife coup in the world," Cassidy says. "But instead, they formed national parks, ostracised the Ba'aka. The logging companies have come in, trashed their





'I got really angry, so I went down to the Bantu, and I didn't realise but a whole bunch of Ba'aka were following me with sticks. The gendarme guy pulled out his pistol'

forest for them, and it's a mess."

Yandoumbé and Bayanga lie inside the Dzanga Sangha Reserve, a 4,000km² area of the Central African Republic, which in turn is a part of the Sangha River Tri-national Protected Area, which also spreads into Cameroon and Congo-Brazzaville. Two sections, the Dzanga and Ndoki sectors, (covering 495 km² and 725 km² respectively) have been designated the Dzanga Ndoki National Park, in which all hunting, including that practised only with nets by its indigenous people, is prohibited. The Ba'aka have as a result been forced to take their chances in a region between the national parks, known as the "community hunting zone". Even the name infuriates Sarno. He says it practically advertises the region to those hunting with guns and wire snares for profit rather than with the traditional methods employed by the Ba'aka, who hunt to stay alive.

"For their way of life in the forest to continue, the Ba'aka need an abundance of wildlife because their hunting methods are very inefficient," Sarno told the audience during a Q&A after the film premiere in Berlin. "If there's not enough wildlife, they can go hunting all day and not catch anything. The poaching with shotguns is just decimating the small mammals, the duiker populations have crashed, and it's the same with monkeys. These are animals that the Ba'aka hunt."

Sarno tells me how frustrations have often spilled over. On one evening at the beginning of the year, after a day watching Bantu hunters traipse past his house with backpacks filled with forest booty, Sarno says he was approached by a 16-year-old pygmy boy, who was in tears. The boy said that gendarmes, supposedly ambushing poachers, had beaten him and confiscated his spear, machete and the single porcupine he had caught.

"I got really angry," Sarno says. "So I went down and I didn't realise because I didn't look behind me but a whole bunch of Ba'aka

were following me with sticks. And when we got there, I guess they saw this big group armed with sticks and they sort of got worried. And the gendarme guy pulled out his pistol."

Sarno describes a scene of near riot, as he wrestled with the pistol and the Ba'aka came to his defence. After the situation eventually calmed down without serious injury, the authorities threatened to arrest and deport Sarno, drawing the WWF into the fracas. "The authorities eventually supported me," says Sarno, "but then the World Wildlife came by and said, 'Oh, it's very bad that you did this. If there's a problem with the project, you should bring it up, come and talk to us about it'. I said, 'Well, I've been telling you for a few years now about this problem and it keeps happening.'"

Johannes Kirchgatter, the Africa Projects leader for the WWF, acknowledges that the situation in Dzanga Sangha is far from ideal. He also concedes almost all of Sarno's points concerning over-hunting and lack of adequate policing in the community hunting zone. However, Kirchgatter, who speaks very highly of Sarno's value as a bridge between the Ba'aka and the WWF, says the organisation can only do what it can in the extreme circumstances presented in the area, particularly since the 2013 coup d'état.

"The problem is that the WWF is almost the only institution working there," he says. "All problems that occur are blamed on us. Whatever happens is blamed on WWF."

The Ba'aka often find themselves without adequate representation in an endless series of high-level talks between the CAR government (such as it is), the WWF and other NGOs, as well as logging companies with their eye on the tropical hardwood. There have been a number of reports published through the years concerning how best to carve up the forest with only the most meagre lip service paid to the interests of the Ba'aka. Although one of Sarno's friends in London jokingly refers to him as the "Ba'aka foreign minister", he is a reluctant out-and-out spokesperson. "If porcupine hunters are being harassed by the guards, I'll put a stop to that by having a small riot," Sarno says, "[but] I don't go out advocating for them."

Perhaps the most exciting proposal for securing the Ba'aka's voice on all levels of discussion is a project by Oxford-based organisation Insight Share, with which Sarno has recently been in contact. Insight Share was founded 15 years ago by the brothers Nick and Chris Lunch and brings video skills to under-represented communities, who are then encouraged to produce short documentary films from a unique insider's viewpoint.

"Participatory video", as the process is known, has been successful among

Jungle life: when threatened the Ba'aka will leave their roadside village and disappear into the deep rainforest for months at a time

indigenous communities in Ethiopia, Peru, Panama, and the Philippines, among others, and also recently brought a wave of awareness and funding to a Baka community in eastern Cameroon. The videos are markedly more authentic for having been produced by trusted community members and provide perhaps the only real representation of the indigenous people's lifestyle, free from either sentimentality or the editing out of inconvenient truths. Insight Share provides a long-term commitment, including training and equipment, and their continued success hinges on the presence of a trusted facilitator - someone like Louis Sarno.

Sarno is confident that the Ba'aka of his village would be hugely enthusiastic for the project and is hopeful that Samedi, who has developed an interest in film through his starring role in the recent German documentary, may be inspired to get involved. Nick Lunch is already working with Richard Gayer, one of Sarno's close friends based in London, to raise funds and assess logistics to bring participatory video to Yandoumbé some time in 2015.

"Louis' role is absolutely central, as sort of a gatekeeper, in this project," Lunch says. "When we raise money for this project, we must allocate a salary for Louis."

7

SPRAYING BULLETS

In early 2013, the peace in this small corner of the Central African Republic's far south west was brutally shattered by news emanating from the capital. There were graphic tales of the kind of violence to which the country has never previously borne witness. "I was hearing BBC reports and through the Mauritanian shopkeeper, who had his contacts in Bangui, about the approach of the Seleka," Louis Sarno says.

Towards the end of 2012, a rebel army bearing a name that means "alliance" or "coalition" in the country's official language Sango had fought its way to power in some northern and central regions of the Central African Republic. The president of the past decade, François Bozizé, initially tried to stem the rising wave of disruption and dissatisfaction by signing a peace accord with Seleka leaders and offering a number of compromises. But in March 2013, claiming exasperation at broken promises, Seleka militia marched all but unopposed into Bangui and toppled the president.

Bozizé, who had seized control in a similar coup d'état 10 years previously, did not hang around to fight his corner. The buzzing sound heard near Bayanga soon after, coming from the direction of the

Sangha River, turned out to be the engine of a boat motoring the president to exile.

Locals joke that the Central African Republic has survived coups d'état approximately once a decade since it earned independence from France in 1960. But this time, the change of government in Bangui precipitated two years (and counting) of savagery that has terrifying echoes of past conflicts in Rwanda and Darfur. The Seleka, a mostly Muslim coalition, rampaged through the country for about a year, with little more than token intervention from France, wary of previous failed operations in their former colonies in Africa. But then, citing defence of the country's religious identity, loose rabbles of mainly Christian militia sprang up across the Central African Republic, assembling under the title "anti-balaka".

The anti-balaka further terrorised the country and slaughtered Muslims, often showcasing their butchery in front of the relatively few international journalists covering events. Almost all Muslims have now either been forced to flee the Central African Republic or have been murdered standing their ground - and still the violence continues. According to most recent reports, "thousands" are dead and 430,000 people have been forced to flee their homes.

News of Bozizé's routing reached Yandoumbé quickly in March 2013. Word swiftly followed that the Seleka were on their way and workers from the WWF and other NGOs had been persuaded to flee. Sarno initially chose not to go, but the year that followed would become the most turbulent he had endured since first arriving in Africa.

The Ba'aka, known to be the poorest people in the country, were not an immediate target of the Seleka, whose beatings seemed primarily designed to extract money. Besides, the Ba'aka's survival skills allowed them to vanish into the forest, a natural refuge from the Seleka forces, which comprised mainly ill-equipped, desert-dwelling fighters from the north. Sarno retreated to the forest with four of five Ba'aka families for the first three weeks after the coup d'état, hoping to weather the storm beneath the canopy. But word soon came from Shamek, a Muslim, still manning his shop in Bayanga, that a second group of Seleka was on the way. They were nastier than the first, and Sarno was one of their principal targets.

There were rumours, which had apparently now reached the Seleka, that Sarno had prised from the Ba'aka the location of the rainforest source of "red mercury", a mythical commodity, but thought to be more valuable than diamonds. Sarno says: "The local Africans always wondered, and some of them had

'When those poachers slaughtered 26 elephants, I was glad. I knew finally there would be a vigorous international response'

said to me, 'We know why all the other white people are here, but we haven't figured out why you're here ... There's something you're not telling us. We haven't figured it out yet, but I think it's because of this mercury.'"

The Seleka threatened to take Ba'aka hostage should Sarno not emerge with his secrets from the forest, finally leaving him with no choice but to flee first to Congo-Brazzaville, with his family, and then to the United States, by himself.

"It was the worst moment of my life in a lot of ways," Sarno says of the time he bade farewell to Agati and their children. "They were going to head into the forest, so they would be all right. But it was horrible just leaving them like that."

What he initially expected to be a three-week trip to America stretched into three months of misery. The Seleka rampaged through Yandoumbé and Bayanga and every phone call with Shamek described new horrors.

Seleka climbed a viewing platform in the national park and sprayed bullets through the families of bathing elephants, killing 26 animals and hacking off their tusks. They also ransacked Sarno's house, tearing apart his notebooks containing work from 30 years, destroying recordings, stealing medicines and crunching beneath their boots the last authentic example of the mbyo flute known in the world. It had been bequeathed to Sarno by its last maestro, who had since died.

Shamek managed to use his financial muscle to halt further slaughter of elephants, convincing the Seleka general to focus his efforts on warding off other poachers swarming to the area. The elephant massacre also belatedly brought international attention to the plight of Dzanga Sangha and Sarno got wind that a former Israeli commando named Nir Kalron, who had more recently turned his attention to conservation in the world's most threatened areas, was leading a party back to the region to ensure the protection of the elephant habitats.

Meeting up with the conservationists in Cameroon, Sarno travelled with them back to Bayanga and, emboldened, realised it was time to negotiate with the Seleka leaders. "I knew where the base was, so I

went,” Sarno says. “I walked up and I said, ‘I want to see the colonel’.”

Speaking through an interpreter to the Chadian Seleka colonel, Sarno demanded the Ba’aka be left alone. They had nothing to offer, he said. The colonel seemed willing to co-operate and Sarno gave him a Casio watch for his understanding. (The colonel later said: “I will die with this watch on my arm.”) The largesse bought immunity from hassles by senior figures in the Seleka but instructions did not filter to the underlings. Soon, after many more petty invasions to Yandoumbé, Sarno and the Ba’aka upped sticks again and fled into the forest, where they stayed for another three months.

Even after the Seleka were finally beaten into retreat, however, and their own president deposed in Bangui, any return to Yandoumbé was short-lived. The anti-balaka arrived three days later. Shamek, whose presence in Bayanga had been invaluable during the Seleka’s occupation, was forced to flee across the border. His store was ransacked by looters, and enormous credit accounts (including one extended to Sarno) remain unpaid. Other Muslims had little option but to follow him and stay in refugee camps in Congo-Brazzaville and Cameroon. Many were forced to part with huge cattle herds, their entire livelihood sold for a pittance.

Sarno and Cassidy both stared down anti-balaka brigands, sensing that the bravado of the young mercenaries would be unable to withstand the gumption of their seniority. There was no chain of command among the lawless groups, so negotiation proved impossible, but both adopted the kind of strategies best employed to undermine a playground bully.

“If you act scared in front of them, they get worse,” Sarno says. “But if you stand up to them, they back off. They had a real bully, thug mentality, the anti-balaka. They knew that I’d come back when the Seleka were there, so there was something about me they weren’t quite sure about. So I was just standing up to them. I wasn’t afraid to scold them ... They’re not afraid to kill people, because they have killed people already and are used to it. But for me, it was just a bluff.”

Eventually, Sarno and Cassidy, among others, managed to persuade what was left

of the municipal authorities to arrange a small group of fighters from the Faca to come to the area. As expected, the bullies of the anti-balaka disappeared at the first sign of a force with bigger guns. The Faca remain in the region and a delicate peace holds.

It is difficult to quantify now what was lost during the raid on Sarno’s home. His journals and flute were irreplaceable, but even more so, any notion of an Edenic idyll was permanently shattered.

While exiled in the United States, Sarno wrote a fresh account of the Seleka occupation of Yandoumbé, a 19,000-word essay named *Flight (From Paradise)*. It is astonishingly good: an impassioned telling of what remains a globally under-reported crisis, from Sarno’s unique viewpoint from deep within the country’s overlooked indigenous community. It is deeply personal, but tells a story of broad relevance. Sarno’s Ba’aka friends are given the rounded characterisation often absent from anthropological and journalistic studies, while the narrator, who describes himself as “a bag of fragile bones”, offers bitter commentary.

“I’m still a refugee in the country of my birth,” Sarno writes. “Five, six times I’ve had to delay my return to Africa, as I watch my beautiful adopted country Centrafrique being pulverised, driven into the dirt. People murdered; houses, offices and hospitals looted; whole towns pillaged; kidnappings for ransom; brutal mass rapes, as if the militias are intent on raping every woman and girl in Centrafrique.”

He continues: “I’ll let you in on a secret. When those Sudanese poachers came to Dzanga bai and slaughtered 26 elephants with automatic weapons and then chopped off their faces to free the tusks, I was glad. I really was! Because I knew that now, finally, there would be a vigorous international response.”

8

‘MAYBE I’VE DAMAGED THEM’

Today, Sarno has reason for cautious optimism. The film-makers behind *Song From the Forest* have put in place a mechanism by which audience members are encouraged to donate to a fund for the Ba’aka. Proceeds from the soundtrack CD, comprising Sarno’s recordings, also go directly to him. He used some of these funds to build a new house, which cost the equivalent of €2,500. Ba’aka builders helped him with construction.

Sarno is travelling to New York this month and has also agreed to a re-release of his only published memoir. He says he has not softened in his opinion of its qualities, but needs the money a boost in

sales will bring.

Moreover, Sarno is in poor health and now makes the most of trips out of Africa to receive treatment for a number of ailments. His medical record reads like an encyclopaedia of exotic maladies – leprosy, loa loa, typhus, malaria and hepatitis B and D – but their combined effects, particularly on his liver, have left him requiring regular surgery that is not available anywhere near to his home.

Sarno told me that he accepts the health risks of the life he has chosen to lead – “Everyone else gets cancer from car exhaust in the city; each place you live has its own risks” – but also knows that he will die should any emergency take place while he is in Yandoumbé. He will combine the trip to the United States with another stay in hospital for some preventative surgery.

“I don’t feel that I have very long to live, so my time is valuable,” Sarno tells me during our journey across Cameroon.

For all the health-scares, coups d’état and warnings of the perils of jungle life, some time this year, Sarno will celebrate his 30th anniversary of permanent residency in the forest with his family. Yet, in his more reflective moments, he says he questions whether his presence among the Ba’aka has been of any lasting value. He even wonders if his time in the forest may have had more negative effects than good on the people who have welcomed him to share their home.

“My life has been enriched,” Sarno says, “[but] for them has it ultimately been a good thing? I mean, it’s been a good thing for certain individuals. I’ve helped people out. My interventions have helped save people’s lives and stuff. But has it been good for the whole community in general? I don’t know.”

Closest to home, Sarno’s specific concerns centre on Samedi, his oldest son, who has been afforded the kind of opportunities almost no other boys in his position could expect. Samedi does not appear to have been overwhelmed by what he has seen of the Western world – he rarely comments to his father about his travels and has never expressed any desire to leave Yandoumbé for good – but Sarno says he has also not pursued the development of hunting skills as keenly as other boys his age. Sarno worries that Samedi may develop unrealistic expectations, perhaps one day to live in the United States, which will leave him unfulfilled by his life in Africa.

The same fears run through Sarno’s preoccupations about his Ba’aka friends in a wider sense. “Maybe I’ve damaged them in some way, that they’re unsatisfied with the traditional way of life,” he says.

Sarno has typically not been able to resist disrupting what he considers to be an imbalance between the various community

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Outside influence: Sarno worries that his presence amid the Ba'aka for so many years may have upset their traditional simple life

groups in the area. He has, for instance, always demanded Ba'aka be paid for their work and had stood up for them in conflicts against the Bantu of Bayanga, going against the long-established status quo. He told me that in some ways, however, Ba'aka seem more comfortable in the victims' role, when they are not burdened by the demands of economics and village life. They are much more vibrant and, specifically, musical when they are out in the forest, yet spend increasing amounts of time idling in Yandoumbé.

"I've been a big traditionalist but I don't believe they should be owned by other people, things like that," Sarno says. "I believe they should be considered fully human. But, you know, I like to see them retain their forest skills and pride in their music and all this kind of stuff. Somehow they still have their music, but it's not as strong as it used to be. Is it my fault? I don't know."

During his early years in the rainforest, Sarno says he drew some criticism from anthropologists for his lack of academic qualifications and for methods of integration that do not conform with those expected in the discipline. I struggled to find concrete evidence of these criticisms, but Sarno still considers himself to be a pariah among academics, particularly in the United States. However, he also insists repeatedly that he is neither an anthropologist nor a musicologist, titles that suggest formal training, and is frequently bewildered by the interest shown in him, academic or otherwise. He has said he feels that his life in the Central African Republic is no more remarkable than anyone transferring East Coast for West in the United States, or trading one European capital for another.

Many of Sarno's Western friends consider his only real failing to be his apparent unwillingness to share his vast knowledge; his lack of interest in publishing what he has learnt from his time in the forest. Despite a lack of formal qualifications, he has done what amounts to the fieldwork of about 10 anthropologists, and has insights into the lives of the pygmies of Yandoumbé that no one else has ever collated.

Lobley has floated the idea of Sarno travelling to Oxford more regularly, in some kind of visiting professor's role, but the logistics of admission to academic institutions are notoriously difficult to arrange, particularly with Sarno himself often unwilling to jump through countless administrative hoops. Others have talked about securing Sarno an honorary degree ("They bloody well should give him one,"

says John Dunbar, one of Sarno's London friends) but arguably much of the unique value of Sarno's work has depended on his freedom from institutional commitments.

Despite his bad experience with his first memoir, Sarno has actually continued writing over the past 30 years. He has completed at least two other book-length memoirs while living in Yandoumbé, neither of which have been distributed beyond his circle of friends.

Although his first unpublished memoir, *Last Thoughts Before Vanishing From the Face of the Earth*, was the source for *OKA!*, the manuscript reportedly bears little resemblance to the screen version. Sarno says the other book, detailing a long excursion he took with two Ba'aka friends into northern Congo, did not impress his agent in the US. Both are unpublished, and Sarno says he is not sure where the manuscripts are. (I managed to find one in Dunbar's house in London.)

Sarno confesses to having adopted some of the Ba'aka's habits, in particular a live-for-the-moment attitude; they do not concern themselves with either the past or the future and Sarno speaks fondly of the outlook.

"You're more alive," he says, describing the Ba'aka philosophy on life. "You're living in the present; the past doesn't exist any more. And it's good, otherwise you get hung up about problems in the past and grudges. The past is finished. You've got to make the present as pleasant as possible. And the future, well it hasn't happened yet, so why should you worry about it?"

"I think I have that a bit," Sarno says. "I think it's been a positive thing in my life. Sometimes it makes it hard to live in the modern world, not thinking about the future. The modern world, people are hardly living in the present at all, they're always worrying about the future."

In a recurring fantasy, Sarno says that he wants one day to go even further into the forest, and never come back. He knows of a small clearing, free of fresh growth, in which he sees himself residing permanently.

"If I had really good money and when I ran out of darjeeling tea I could get some shipped out somehow and brought out, I could be very tempted to just stay in the forest, especially if they could make me some kind of chair that I could sit in and a table where I could write," Sarno says. "I would be happy to stay out in the forest. It's beautiful." **N**



Howard Swains has written on poetry and science for *Newsweek*. He spent two weeks travelling in Africa with Sarno for this piece.

[@howardswains](#)

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

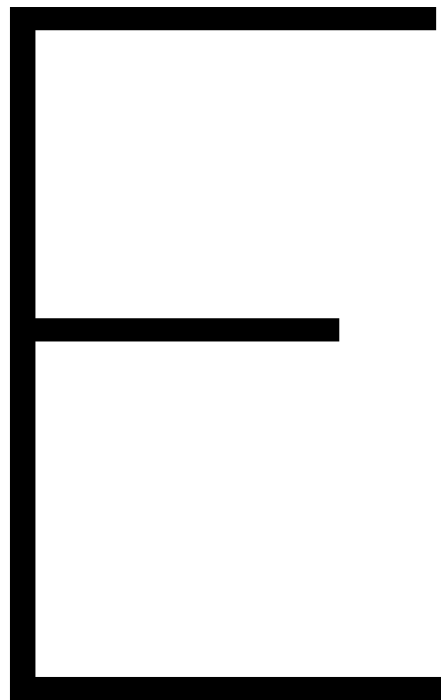
Four years after a booze-fuelled anti-Semitic rant lost John Galliano two fashion houses, his reputation and many of his friends, the bad boy of British fashion is back

BY CATHERINE OSTLER



Old and new: John Galliano at his S/S 2007 show for Dior, left; one of the looks from his Artisanal Collection for Maison Margiela S/S 2015, right





Early in March 2015, almost exactly four years since he spontaneously combusted with a booze-fuelled, anti-Semitic rant in a Parisian café, John Galliano presented his comeback collection on the catwalks at the Grand Palais. His collection was called “Défilé” – defiled? Spoiled? Violated? – and comprised 30 looks created for his new employer, Maison Margiela. There were neon makeup and accessories, Mary-Jane shoes and fake-fur slippers, short skirts, long coats, patent finishes – most of that more wearable than it might sound – and a few odd hobo-ish poses – models scuttling down the catwalk clutching large handbags as if gripped in a fit of consumption. At the end, two rounds of applause failed to entice the designer – who used to appear in a blaze of costume and posing at the end of all his shows – to take a bow at all. A new age of Galliano had begun: his stealth period.

The show was actually Galliano’s second of the year. Before Defile, January had seen a womenswear couture show in London, the “Artisanal” collection, presented not only to press and buyers but also supportive friends and fashion designers from Christopher Bailey from Burberry to Alber Elbaz of Lanvin. The reviews were broadly positive; as Plum Sykes of US *Vogue* says: “It was a very modern take on couture, rather amazing. His clothes often make more sense when photographed or taken apart ... they looked beautiful in American *Vogue*.”

Hired in October last year by Italian-born Renzo Rosso to head the hip Margiela brand founded by the Belgian Martin Margiela, Galliano is undoubtedly back in

the saddle. The fashion crowd wanted to know whether his designs could successfully marry the frayed-hem, plain-yet-arty aesthetic of Maison Margiela with his signature flamboyant theatricality – or whether he would choose between the axioms.

But the question for everyone else was this: how has Galliano managed to return to the front line of fashion after his spectacular fall from grace? Can a man so hell-bent on self-destruction put himself back together again in the increasingly complex world of high fashion, where creativity meets commercial reality, sometimes in a brutal fashion?

‘I love Hitler’

Today Café La Perle, situated around the corner from the Picasso Museum, on a street junction in Paris’s fashionable, originally Jewish quarter, Le Marais – where Galliano still lives in a first-floor apartment – is bustling with young men in suits and women in mini-skirts in the early spring sunshine. There are formica table tops and orange, worn banquettes, and Heineken in plastic cups; the place is popular with fashion types now but it is neither expensive nor flashy.

This is Galliano’s local brasserie. And it was here that he, on more than one occasion, launched into drunken anti-Semitic tirades against other guests, total strangers, who he claimed he thought were being either too noisy, or too ugly.

In October 2010, he called a fellow customer an “ugly Jewish” woman; in December he told two women “I love Hitler” and “your mothers and ancestors would all be gassed”; and, in the final outburst in February 2011, he told an art historian called Geraldine Bloch she had a “dirty Jewish face”. He insulted her “ugly eyebrows”, her “cheap thigh boots” and then struck one of the pouting “rock star” poses he used to relish at the end of his fashion shows.

And that was that. A video of one of these rants went viral. Galliano’s bosses at Christian Dior, where he had been creative director for 14 years, sacked him; he would later be found guilty of anti-Semitism in a Paris court. Many – from Natalie Portman, the face of Miss Dior Cherie scent, to Suzanne Johnson, then general manager of Saks department store – were quick to say they would not be associated with him.

Meltdown in Paris

It is hard to gauge the current mood of Paris’s Jewish community, still reeling in shock at the *Charlie Hebdo* and Jewish supermarket murders earlier this year; Paris is understandably even more sensitive about anti-Semitism than it was when Galliano had his rant. Yet Richard

Prasquier, who was president of CRIF (Conseil Représentatif des Institutions juives de France) at the time, is forgiving.

“I strongly supported the reaction of Dior at the time to strip him of his position because I was appalled by his comments. But I met him – he wanted to see me – six months later. He told me he was extremely sorry and was doing work on himself. I told him that was good news. I haven’t seen him since. I always like to give people the benefit of the doubt and I appreciated that he wanted to see me.” The current president of CRIF would not comment.

The fashion industry has been mostly supportive of Galliano’s attempts at recovery. Sykes says: “Everyone in the fashion business really admires the way John Galliano has worked hard to get back on his feet. A lot of people are extraordinarily fond of him and very happy to see he’s recovered.” The industry is accustomed to stories of addiction. Aside from Alexander McQueen, who hanged himself in 2010, Marc Jacobs, Donatella Versace and Calvin Klein all struggled with addiction – they know the acute stress the industry can cause.

The fashion world also missed his talent. A Galliano show was a theatrical event, says Sykes, “like the first night of a play. Only a McQueen show was the same. You would wait for two hours, maybe – but it would be mesmerising”. At the Opera Comique in Paris at the last show for his own label in October 2010, just before his first rant, gold confetti fluttered down from the ceiling as 1920s-style models paraded in the old theatre. Galliano came on last, hobbled, shy, yet defiant. The clothes were exquisite, eclipsing the rumours about his wellbeing that had already begun to fly.

Guns for hire

Born in 1960 in Gibraltar to a Gibraltarian policeman-turned-plumber and a Spanish woman who later became a dinner lady, Galliano moved to south London at the age of six. Years ago I went to his parents’ house to interview his mother, a glamorous woman in an ordinary terraced house with a heavy, Spanish Catholic interior – shiny

He called a fellow customer an “ugly Jewish” woman. He told two women “I love Hitler” and “your mothers and ancestors would all be gassed”



Reformed rebel: since the incident, Galliano has been to rehab and, besides designing Kate Moss's wedding dress in July 2011, kept a low profile

wood furniture, antimacassars, crucifixes and huge framed photographs of the Gallianos' beloved son, grinning from ear to ear with his dyed blonde hair. Bright, creative, he went to grammar school and then to St Martin's, London's training ground for fashion designers.

His entire 1984 graduation collection - "Les Incroyables" (The Incredibles), inspired by the French Revolution - was bought by Joan Burstein, owner of London's premier talent-spotting boutique, Browns, in South Molton Street. Diana Ross was the first buyer. Burstein has said many times that seeing his collection was the most exciting fashion moment of her entire career.

Galliano's meteoric beginnings coincided with Anna Wintour's tenure as editor of British *Vogue* - "they grew up together in a way," says Sykes - and Wintour has supported him ever since. With fashion stylist Amanda Harlech and milliner Stephen Jones, he founded his own label. Thrillingly imaginative yet never financially robust, he went through several backers and even bankruptcy until a seminal show at socialite São Schlumberger's house in Paris in 1993 fixed his own label (with new backers, again through Wintour). Two years later he landed a plum job at the house of Givenchy, owned by Bernard Arnault's fashion conglomerate LVMH. He was the first British designer to head a French couture house. The next year he moved on to Dior. Under his tenure the stores and revenue grew tenfold.

But running parallel to this story of career highs and increasing influence - which saw him dress Princess Diana for the

Met Ball (a blue and black slip bias-cut dress compared to a nightie by some, seen as refreshingly different for Diana by others) and Nicole Kidman in a chartreuse gown still named as a top 10 Oscars dress - lay an immense battle for personal lucidity.

Wintour and friends had already performed some kind of intervention in 1990. An addictive personality, his friend and business partner Steven Robinson had become the man who did nearly everything for him but eventually tempers frayed, Galliano's behaviour became erratic and Steven died of a cocaine overdose in 2007, whether deliberate or accidental, nobody knows.

In 2003, Galliano's father died. Relations with Arnault and Sidney Toledano - the boss of Dior - were strained. Fashion design had become increasingly stressful. Aside from the imperative to create clothes that sold, there was a new demand for other high margin products - the accessories and branded scent - and the relentless desire for publicity and editorial coverage that would secure sales in boutiques. Designers had become celebrities, but they were also artists, business people, employees, employers and ambassadors for themselves and their brands, all at once. Many - like McQueen and Galliano - were running more than one label, their own and also another brand as a gun for hire.

By 2007 Galliano found himself alone. Harlech had been poached by his rival, Karl Lagerfeld, at Chanel, and Robinson was dead. Eccentricity had become a personal trademark - at his first show a girl had thrown a dead mackerel into the audience - but it was less charming seen away from

the "divine decadence" of his fashion (his words). He had often seemed "annoyed by other people", wrote Dana Thomas in her recent book about McQueen and Galliano, *Gods and Kings*. Staying in bed when he shouldn't - for example, when asked to a state dinner at Buckingham Palace - had become a regular occurrence. There was also the matter of his questionable taste; his obsession with the homeless, ruined and derelict could be seen as boundary-pushing or just plain wrong.

Reining in the beast

After his fateful rant had exploded in Galliano's face, he fled Paris and went into rehab, in Arizona and then Switzerland. There are some who think Dior could have sent him there before sacking him, although Galliano eventually lost his unfair dismissal case. He was sacked from his eponymous label too - also owned by LVMH - and his old friend and helpmate Bill Gaytten, originally a pattern cutter from Manchester, took over in his stead.

Galliano had lost both his fashion houses and also, unusually, his own name. The steps to recovery were not smooth. First, there was silence. After rehab, he sank into what friends called a "deep depression". Kate Moss - like Wintour - was a supporter. She had organised a surprise 50th birthday party for him at the Savoy hotel in London a few weeks before doomsday, at which an old London friend says he had been "a shadow of himself". Galliano was wearing "a near-invisible headband that pulled the skin on his face and smoothed out his wrinkles". The ageing process was never going to come

Two decades of dresses

Galliano's gowns



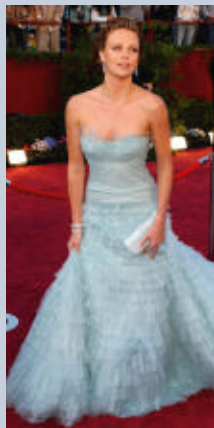
Princess Diana in bias-cut dress at the Met Ball in 1996



Carla Bruni on the Paris catwalk for Dior in 1997



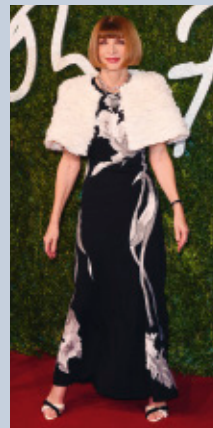
Kylie Minogue opens her "Showgirl" world tour in 2005



Charlize Theron in Galliano for Dior at the 2005 Oscars



Kate Moss at the 2009 British Fashion Awards



Anna Wintour at the British Fashion Awards in 2014



Rude boy: Galliano gives Paris the finger while dressed in a Union Flag coat

easily to a self-styled enfant terrible.

Moss also asked him to design her wedding dress in July 2011. It was a classic bias-cut Galliano number - a hit. And where Moss leads, the rest of the fashion set follows. A guest at the wedding said that when Galliano walked into the Gloucestershire church everyone stood up and clapped. "US *Vogue* ran the pictures, including a shot of John with Kate. I'm not sure any other editor would have done that at that point," says Sykes.

But a few weeks later, came a new low: the circumstances of Robinson's death emerged. Robinson, who had said Galliano "made him feel safe" and even slept on the end of his bed when he was nervous, had been found dead in his own flat in the Marais, while Galliano was on holiday in 2007. Shortly before Robinson's death, a team member recalled seeing him "high as a kite and screaming hysterically" after a show. It was revealed that he'd had between 5-7g of cocaine in his blood - a fifth of that amount would have been enough to kill him.

In 2008, a 40-year old illegal immigrant and drug dealer from Senegal called Allassane Seck had been convicted of Robinson's manslaughter and sent to jail. Seck's lawyers said that he had often supplied cocaine to other public figures, including a cultural adviser to Nicolas Sarkozy and friend of Carla Bruni François Baudot. As no journalists attended the case, and no documents showing Robinson's cause of death were ever released, the revelations provoked accusations of a cover-up aimed at protecting the reputation of the House of Dior, as well as senior figures in the French establishment. Around 1,000 people went

to Robinson's memorial at the American Cathedral in Paris; Stephen Jones and set designer Michael Howells did the readings as Galliano was too upset to speak.

But the revelations a few years later raised the question, if it was an open secret that Galliano was in so much trouble, why weren't more drastic steps taken to save him from himself? His closest friends have come to believe a conspiracy theory - that he was set up by Dior (the rumour goes that his drink at the café had been spiked) in order to give them an excuse to fire him. While that seems particularly far-fetched - how could you ever set someone up as an anti-Semite? - it certainly seems to be the case that there was trouble afoot.

There was tension between the demands of the business (a public company) and the creative impulses of its designer. After a Pocahontas-meets-Anne Boleyn show for Dior in 2006, in which he was accused of hubris and being out of touch, it was believed that Galliano had finally been reined at the ready-to-wear label, with mediocre results.

The collections became constrained, the designer's morale flagged and relations with the management deteriorated. Only Russians were said to be buying Dior. Then came the financial crash. More and more emphasis - in advertising and elsewhere - was given to the increasingly sacred cash cows of handbags and scent keeping fashion houses afloat. He was being urged to lift profitability at his own label, John Galliano, of which LVMH also owned the majority.

"He was like a bird trapped in a cage, although a gilded one at £4m a year," said one fashion director. "He told friends he was having panic attacks, he had to take valium to come to work, but he didn't know how to escape."

Galliano had become convinced that possible replacements were being interviewed behind his back and found himself in that particular nightmare of having a commercial responsibility to fulfill, while doubting that he had the full support of management.

Galliano the penitent

Clean and sober, in June 2013 Galliano gave an interview to American TV chat-show host Charlie Rose. But talks at Parsons Fashion School in New York had to be cancelled after a student protest and a collaboration with the late Oscar de la Renta (brokered by Wintour) fell flat when he was photographed the day before the show in, what looked like Orthodox Jewish headgear - his people insisted it was just an unfortunate coincidence.

But then two things happened: Wintour anointed him and Maison Margiela appointed him. Renzo Rosso, the Italian founder of Diesel and a long-time admirer,

hired Galliano for Margiela; in his statement he said that Galliano was one of "greatest, undisputed talents of all time". And Wintour - as well as Cate Blanchett at the Oscars, and Rihanna at the Grammys, and Madonna on Italian television - started wearing his clothes.

Days after Galliano lost his unfair dismissal case, Wintour picked him as the person to present her with a lifetime achievement award at the British Fashion Awards and wore one of his creations, a black gown with silvery white embroidered tulips. In his speech he said he wouldn't be where he was, "healthy and happy" and about to embark on his next venture, if it wasn't for her.

Wintour didn't stop there. The "Artisanal" collection officially launched in London in January - agonisingly, it was held a day after thousands of people marched in support of *Charlie Hebdo* and French Jews in Paris - and was shot for *Vogue*. Blanchett wore a black dress from his Margiela collection to the Oscars - she had worn his very first red-carpet creation in 1999 - as did Wintour, a pale pink bias-cut dress. Both were lovely: pared-back, beautifully cut. Apart from a chat with his old friend from St Martin's, US *Vogue*'s Hamish Bowles, Galliano turned down all requests for interviews because he, and Maison Margiela, had decided that, as the house told me, "the clothes should speak for themselves".

They have definitely started talking. Moss wore the collection in *W* magazine and Russian *Vogue* featured the clothes. The New York stockists who threatened never to buy Galliano again - the Seventh Avenue fashion crowd who find it hard to forgive him (not that anyone's saying it themselves) - in theory are not a problem, because Margiela has its own stand-alone stores. Indeed, a new branch has just opened in San Francisco, and last week, a new womenswear flagship boutique opened in Milan too, another sign of confidence and ambition.

Picasso's blue period began after the suicide of a friend, who shot himself, drunk, in a Parisian café. He focused on the destitute, before depression lifted and his rose period began.

Galliano's focused, modern, return is punctuated with red and with humour (Shirley Bassey's song *Big Spender* played in his first show of the year).

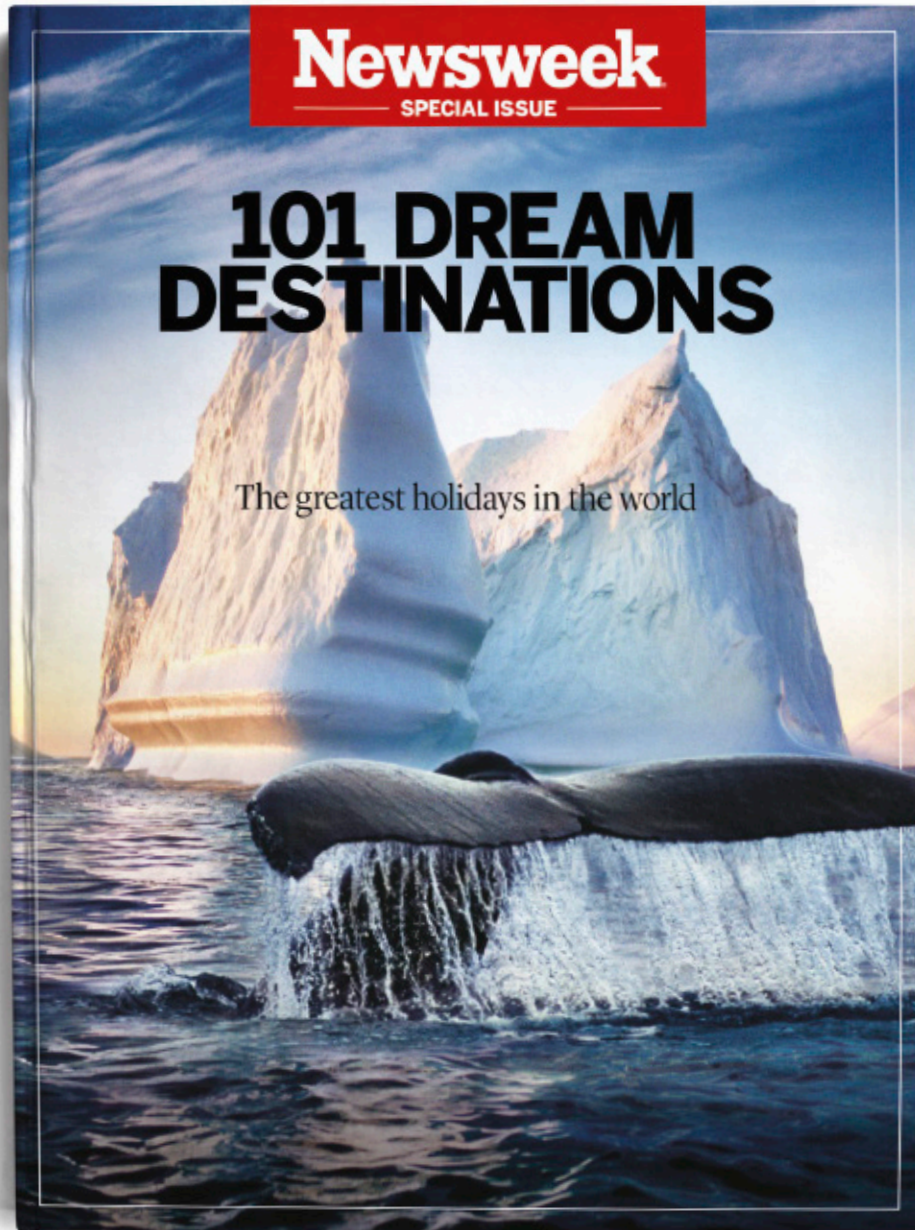
By design, celebrity endorsement, and tight-lipped hard work, John Galliano's stealth period has begun. **N**



Catherine Ostler is a special correspondent to *Newsweek* and a contributing editor at the *Daily Mail*.
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WEEKEND

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GONZALO ARROYO MORENO, BRENDON THORNE/GETTY

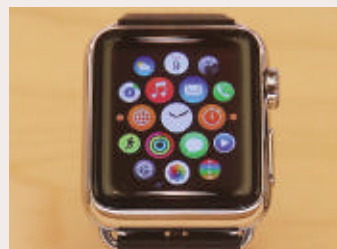
Riding with Mallorca's speed freaks 54

MUSIC

Syriac Christians go into exile, still singing the oldest music in the world
59

KIT

An early test of the much-hyped Apple Watch: what is it actually good for?
61



BOOKS

From Somalia to Sandy Hook: our fatal fascination with the gun
62

CYCLING IN HEAVEN (OR HELL...)

Mallorca's perfect cycling conditions attract the pro teams, 150,000 annual aficionados and one woefully underprepared young novelist



"Are you ready to suffer?" These were the first words that Jan Chouieri, my cycling

guide, addressed to me when we met at my hotel. He was a small man with bright blue eyes, but it would soon transpire that he was also an athlete with thighs of steel, whereas mine are made of buttermilk and dreams.

In the past I was wont to say, quite frivolously: "It's like riding a bicycle - you never forget." I now realise that this expression 1) assumes a hefty degree of initial familiarity - if not profound intimacy - with bicycles, and 2) notably does not concern Road Bikes. A Road Bike is not, I discovered, merely any bicycle ridden on a road, but a high-tech super-light piece of machinery with both gears and brakes for the front and back wheels, and which you are near irrevocably stuck to with special shoes - shoes carefully designed to keep you and the bike together so securely as to endanger your wellbeing every time you want to stop, and which double as danger skates if you do manage to detach yourself and want to walk anywhere. Jan put me on one immediately.

I was sent to Mallorca to investigate its burgeoning reputation as a cycling destination - 150,000 visitors went there to cycle last year, up from

100,000 the year before. One can see why, for it's like a cyclist's most febrile flight of fancy. Along the north-west coast stretches the Serra de Tramuntana mountain range, formed in the Variscan orogeny - a great big Paleozoic crush that folded many of Western Europe's ranges into being - while the central part of the island is called Es pla, Catalan for the plane - or, indeed, "the plan".

The result is a dense variety of gradients and curves that led Bradley Wiggins to describe the island as "a Scalextric track for cyclists", which is exactly what it is like and which quip I shamelessly passed off as my own throughout the trip. The well-maintained roads, plethora of cycling shops and lack of serious car traffic draw in amateurs and professionals alike. It only gets too hot for major bicycling at the very height of summer, when the roads are presumably too overrun with Brits in black socks and Crocs for anyone to be able to cycle anyway. So the Vuelta a Mallorca (The Mallorca Challenge), the island's main event, takes place in February and is used by many of the professional teams use as prep for major competitions like Le Tour de France.

None of this knowledge of Mallorca's cyclistic excellence reassured me as I applied myself inseparably to my Road Bike and took off with Jan for what turned out to be a trip lasting a full four-and-a-half hours. We went up a mountain called the Coll de Sóller, then down the other side, and then did it all over again the other way. Throughout, between dispensations of invaluable advice and teasing goadings designed to whip me into a



Grimace of pain: Peter Leggatt and, right, the skull he found

state of cycling fervour, Jan made hands-free business phone calls in five languages, literally did not sweat at all, and cycled in front, behind and around me like a puppy on a walk as I wheezed monosyllabic conversation. Foolishly, I asked how long the ride would normally take him: 30 minutes.

The landscape was mercilessly beautiful; like the mountains of Greece but more

verdant, and all under a sky squeegeed free of clouds and coloured the swimming-pool blue of Jan's eyes. Dozens of cyclists shot by me with no sound of approach, singly or in pelotons, many surprisingly fat, but all gloved in slick Lycra prophylactic, shimmering as though lubed, their suits resembling an extra, softer alien skin that creased only at the joints. From conversations on the summit and at a café where Jan stopped mainly, I think, out of pity, most were German, bearing out the joke

While you're there

Take the 102-year-old tram through orange groves up into Sóller proper and check out the Can Prunera museum of Modernist art. Its website is canprunera.com



that Mallorca is the country's 17th Federal State.

On reaching the summit, pedalling up to Jan as he shouted warm but intimidating encouragement, I fell off. I say "fell off", but to use that phrase is really to dignify what was more like a leisurely inclination to a horizontal aspect, for a Road Bike does, at least, forbid the indignity of normative falling; your total fastness to the thing ensures that the usual falling repertoire of tumbling, flailing and attempting to obviate or impede your

collapse is out of the question. One merely slows down before relaxing 90 degrees sideways.

Jan said he was expecting this to happen, and the greatest (and only) compliment he paid me was his expression of surprise that it had not happened sooner. This took the edge off our two dozen onlookers' simultaneous Schadenfreude.

But I was to surprise Jan again on the way back. My second collapse occurred when I stopped to pick up a large goat's skull on the side of the road - a trophy that was well worth the gash on the ankle it begat (a "typical beginner's injury"). I shoved it into the back of my shirt (cycling shirts have these very useful little pockets at the back for water, snacks, archaeological remains etc) and sped down to catch up with Jan, who was waiting at the bottom of the mountain with the same worried look my father must have had when he first received notice of my arrival. Jan was both amused and somewhat perturbed when I showed him the skull, and for different reasons we both parted with the warmth of regard one reserves for an affable maniac.

The psychismo did not let up in my hotel, which was responsible for introducing me to Jan in the first place. This resort's main purpose seemed to be to provide as many people as often as possible with "a glass of orange juice and a Refreshing Towel". Never a "hot", "cold" or "wet" towel, this was always a "Refreshing Towel", which

exemplified the hotel's absolute dedication to managing every aspect of your experience - and your experience of that experience.

It was tactical, I thought, that the OJ accompanying the towel was mindblowingly wonderful, but the OJ you had to serve yourself at breakfast was punishingly sour; clearly a Pavlovian design to discourage you from doing anything for yourself that the hotel could do for you, and typical of the obsessive attention to the guests' pleasure and total refreshment that characterised the resort.

Thus on my return I was immediately supplied with OJ and RT, and then my Refreshment was Refreshed with a cyclist's massage, to undo some of the morning's damage to my legs.

This involved essential oils, tinkly music, hot stones dropped on my back, a lemony blindfold, and a little gong rung at the end by the masseuse, Carolina - during all of which my only visual was of Carolina's tiny and somehow extremely touching bare feet pattering in and out of view on the floor, as she moved for better purchase on the different parts of me she needed to oil. Having never had

Field Guide

Where I stayed: The Jumeirah Port Sóller Hotel & Spa on the island's north-west coast. Book with Elegant Resorts to stay seven nights for the price of six, at £1,475 per person. That's based on two people sharing and includes British Airways flights from London Heathrow.

How to get there: A great number of regular flights go to Mallorca from all over Europe.

My cycling guide: Jan, my tormentor and guide, can be contacted via the website ciclismoenmallorca.com. It offers a comprehensive guide to routes, altimetries and bike shops across the island.

What to read: If you can stay awake in the evening after pedalling all day, try Robin McGowan's *Kings of the Road*, an aesthetic and photographic essay in the sport.

What to pack: Ibuprofen and cycling shorts. This reporter was in dire need of both.

a massage before, nor having ever needed one so badly, I can relate that the experience was pretty much The Best Thing Ever, and concluded, of course, with a further glass of OJ and an RT.

Should you want to try the Scalextric track yourself, take Mark Twain's advice: "Get a bicycle. You won't regret it, if you live."



By Peter Leggatt

Arts journalist, mystic and treasure hunter, working on his first novel pgleggatt@gmail.com



MUSSOLINI – THE GUIDED TOUR

The ‘good’ done by Il Duce is still celebrated in Latina, the town he built on the Pontine marshes that remains a living monument of Fascist nostalgia



Latina is a town built by Mussolini in 1932 on the old Pontine Marshes, where

Il Duce is not only considered a “founding father” but is also the subject of guided tours aimed at showing tourists the “good things” done by Fascism. One sunny Saturday morning I decide to embark on one.

People here still call Latina by its original Fascist name: Littoria, referring to the “lictors”, the Roman troops who carried the bundles of rods, or fasces, that gave the party its name. The town was rechristened by law post-war.

“Littoria is a living Fascist monument,” says Riccardo Pece, the head of the tourist office who gives me the grand tour. “One of the good things Mussolini did was drain the swamps, get rid of malaria and distribute land to peasants and settlers. He gave them a house in exchange for their labour and



Reclaimed land: Mussolini inaugurates Littoria from the Lictor Tower

sweat. That’s why people still nourish affection for him”.

Fascism tourism is on trend in Italy. There are thrice-yearly pilgrimages to Mussolini’s tomb in Predappio on the anniversaries of his birth, death and the Fascists’ “March on Rome”. And the island of Ponza, where Mussolini was kept prisoner in 1943, now even hosts a summer festival where plays dramatise his stay there.

The centre of Latina has been preserved as it was. The Fascist buildings have been kept in place and its rationalist architecture is ornamented with pagan statues as well as military and rural bas-reliefs. There is even a gigantic statue of a Sower – hero of the land reclamation – holding a basket of seeds.

After an espresso at the former Fascist Party office – now turned into a bar with a 1930s radio and heater – I look up at the “Lictor Tower” that hosts the city council. Up there is a marble balcony featuring two massive imperial eagles

with fiery eyes and open wings. This is where Mussolini gave the inaugural speech when Littoria – oops, Latina – was founded.

His words are still engraved below: “Peasants must look at this tower dominating the plains as a symbol of Fascist power, where they will find support and justice.” I can almost hear the hands clapping around me.

In front rises a fountain with a ball in the middle: Pece sees my lost expression and explains that “it’s the earth rising from the waters”. The new lands emerging from the marshes. Another fountain has water spouting out of a huge sculpture of the fasces themselves. Time here seems to have been frozen.

Next stop is a fascinating malaria lab. It is housed in the former headquarters of the Fascist Fighters’ Organisation (ONC) that led the drainage operation, now a museum. On the roof lie pagan goddesses of abundance and harvest in sensual poses.

Malaria was finally eradicated

only in 1947, in part thanks to DDT imported by the Americans, but on the way out I bump into director Manuela Francesconi, who tells me that, in reference to Fascism’s achievements, “history cannot be denied”.

By now I’m starving so Pece, who is from a pioneer family, takes me to another historical monument: Restaurant Impero (Empire), as old as Latina. Nothing has changed: the same marble-mosaic floor, open-view kitchen and name. The founder refused to change it at the end of the war, saying it would have been like changing the names of his children.

Now it is run by his daughter, Iris Silvestri. She’s a bright old lady, almost 80. She tells me: “Fascist generals were frequent clients. Even Mussolini came here. Apart from the war, he did many good things for Italy, more than the politicians since the birth of the Italian republic.” She quickly adds: “But please don’t give a bad impression of me. It’s just a matter of being realistic on the good done by Mussolini here.”

His legacy is certainly widespread. Latina is just one of dozens of towns founded on the former marshes. Farmhouses in the area still display the ONC sign and in the town of Sabaudia, the church façade even has a coloured mosaic of Il Duce arranging wheat sheaves behind the Virgin Mary. An inscription on the tower praises “this land that Mussolini redeemed from deadly sterility”.

Field Guide

Getting there: From Rome, drive south for 70 km along the Pontine route or take the train from Termini station.

Where to stay: Miramare seaside hotel is the best bet (hotelmiramarelatina.it).

What to eat: The malaria-infested swamps have given way to fertile plains dotted with kiwi plantations and grazing buffalos. Stop at farmhouses for fresh produce and mozzarella.

Tours: Find them via the sites latinaturismo.it; latinaeventi.it.

What to read: *Canal Mussolini* by Antonio Pennacchi.



By Silvia Marchetti

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THE FINE BAROLOS OF ... DRESDEN

As climate change makes northern Europe warmer and sunnier, the East German state of Saxony is aiming to supplant the vineyards of France and Italy



Martin Schwarz has only 30 bottles left of his new wine. Despite their hefty €50 price

tag, 70 have already been snapped up since the batch went on sale a few months ago. That may be because it's the first-ever barolo grown in the East German state of Saxony. "Saxonian barolo" is what Schwarz jokingly labels his pioneering creation, made of Piedmontese nebbiolo grapes, since barolo itself is a Piedmontese trademark.

But the grapes are the same. Until recently, nebbiolo grapes grew only in regions like Piedmont in northern Italy. Saxony, bordering Poland and the Czech Republic, is Germany's smallest wine region, and for eight centuries vintners here have mostly planted Müller-Thurgau and riesling, earning a well-deserved reputation for excellent dry whites. But with climate change pushing temperatures up, Schwarz decided to try out the red Italian nebbiolo grape here in Radebeul outside Dresden.

"The mountain slopes here hadn't been used for grape-growing for a very long time, but I realised that the sunnier side would be perfect for nebbiolo," explains the 52-year-old. He could not have asked for a more picturesque laboratory: his newly planted slopes below the palace Neufriedstein overlook Radebeul's charming medieval city centre of small shops and neatly paved streets.

Though Radebeulers refer to their city as the Nice of Saxony, because of its mild climate and stunning scenery, planting Italian grapes this far north was a risky venture. Temperatures



Piedmont? No, the Saxon vineyard where Martin Schwarz, below, grows Italian grapes

may not reach quite the levels common on the south side of the Alps, and climate change may also bring a risk in the form of floods.

"I must say I was surprised the grapes ripened," Schwarz recalls of his first harvest, in 2012. One year later, he filled his first batch of bottles - the 100 now on sale - and from last

year's harvest 100 litres are now maturing in his cellar.

Vintners in the traditional German wine-growing regions of Rhineland-Palatinate and Baden-Württemberg are also beginning to experiment with southern European grapes. According to figures from the German Wine Institute, planting of cabernet franc - a traditional Bordeaux grape - more than doubled between 2010 and 2013. Trade journal *Wine Economics and Policy* says climate change is causing monumental changes in wine production, with premium wine production moving north.

"What we're doing now here in the north would not have been possible 20 years ago," reflects Schwarz. "For vintners in Germany, climate change is a good thing. But I do feel for vintners in southern Europe. They can keep planting their grapes,

but they'll get a wine with higher alcohol content."

Indeed, according to *Wine Economics and Policy*, Europe's centuries-old viticulture will undergo an enormous shake-up as entire regions along the coast of Italy, Greece and France become unsuitable for wine-growing altogether, while southern England turns into the new Champagne. A generation from now, pinot noir lovers may well be drinking only the finest Saxonian bottles.

Right now, Schwarz can't think that far ahead, busy as he is with his current grapes and bottles. "Saxonian barolo is lighter than barolo from Piedmont, but you recognise the nebbiolo straight away," he says. "It's a typical nebbiolo; it makes for a very elegant wine."

Field Guide

Where it is: Just outside Dresden. From the airport, Radebeul is a short trip by train or S-Bahn (tram).

Where to stay: Radebeul's hotels include a Radisson Blu and it has many B&Bs.

What to do: Don't miss the annual wine festival in autumn.

Where to get it: Online and from the Sächsische Vinothek shop.



By Elisabeth Braw

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DARK TIMES FOR SUNNY PORTUGAL

Saudade, the peculiarly Portuguese sense of nostalgia and longing, dominates Vitor Gonçalves's story about the people the country lost after the 2008 crash



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In most people's minds, Portugal is a friendly, sunny place with sprawling beaches, bars that look out on to the Algarve, and a teeming capital city full of industrious people. Only some of this is true.

The country is still reeling from the eurocrisis, and so hard was the impact of the financial meltdown there that it has left an entire generation on the ropes. The protagonist of Vitor Gonçalves new film *The Invisible Life*, Hugo, is one of these. Seen through the eyes of this civil servant (Filipe Duarte), Portugal is a glum dystopia.

While Hugo prepares a report of Kafkaesque proportions for his superiors, everyone else in his department is being methodically fired. He chooses to ignore reality and remain passive. For most of the film, the outside world remains blocked out by drapes and shutters, just as Hugo just can't face that the world he knew has collapsed.

Gonçalves's melancholy film



Unable to connect: Filipe Duarte as civil servant Hugo and Maria João Pinho as his ex-girlfriend Adriana

articulates how the crisis has affected the Portuguese, amplifying a sombre streak in the national character that also appeared in the works of the country's iconic poet, Fernando Pessoa. His books often feature clerks who toil in silence and isolation and, like Hugo, these ciphers accept constant sadness as an attribute of human existence. They long for times that have passed and loved ones who have been lost. Their state of mind is that of *saudade*, a profound nostalgia.

Hugo suffers not just because of the precariousness and

obscurity of his way of life, but because he lived through Portugal's brief age of optimism. After a calamitous 20th century blighted by dictatorship and stagnation, the country turned a corner. It modernised and provided education for a generation of highly skilled white-collar workers like Hugo, who were to take the nation on its next step forward.

Then came 2008, and Portugal's ambitions collapsed under the collective weight of debt and one-sided austerity policies. The people who had been intended to propel the economy into the 21st century ended up unemployed or waiting tables. As the crisis deepened, many emigrated to Northern Europe or, in a twist of history, to far-flung former colonies such as Angola, Brazil and Mozambique.

In the film, it transpires that Hugo has an ex-girlfriend, Adriana (Maria João Pinho), who knows his heart. She moved away from Portugal, deciding to work as a stewardess in Holland, her ambition of

becoming an architect long buried. At the same time, she is unable to let go of either the life she left behind or her former lover. When her schedule brings her to her homeland, she has fleeting encounters with Hugo, but they only lead to further disillusionment. In one scene, they almost embrace, almost kiss, but Adriana shrinks back - her life no longer matches Hugo's. She tells him: "You prefer to live with the dead, I live with the living."

The question for Hugo is whether he will turn into his superior in the civil service, a desperately lonely man, locked in a shell. The answer to this question is a ponderous 100 minutes away. Yet despite the heavy drape of *saudade*, *The Invisible Life* has memorable moments, thanks to the elegant camerawork of Leonardo Simões and a finely chiselled performance by Maria João Pinho. In a few scenes, she manages to capture some of the fleetingness and disquiet that is part not only of today's Portugal but of all human existence.

Disaster: the mother of innovation

Every time of crisis spawns its own particular type of film. The intense poverty in Italy after the Second World War was worked through in neorealism, such as DeSica's iconic *Bicycle Thieves*. Germans chose escapism; the *Heimatfilme* (homeland-films) of the 1950s pretended the 20th

century had never happened. The Great Recession of our days, too, will elicit its response in film, likely from the southern European countries most affected. Some might have already appeared, like the bleak *Standing Aside, Watching* by the Greek director Giorgos Servetas.

A SONG OF EXILE

The world's oldest music is sung by Syriac Christians as they flee from Isis and their own ancient homeland

The last time they came along the road to the monastery of Mar Mattai in northern Iraq, it was September. Then, there was a queue of cars stretching back to Mosul. There were little girls in white dresses with curly hair tied up in ribbons. Mothers carried spongecakes in boxes on their knees. Their husbands, moustaches combed and blazers brushed, were looking forward to an aniseed tot of arak when they arrived.

As they left the city behind, the road climbed into the mountains, dusty, sandy and dotted with oleander bushes. The stickiness of the plain gave way to a cool, dry breeze.

At the end of the road, the monastery was overflowing: this was one of the great festivals for Syriac Christians in Iraq and beyond. There was feasting and prayers, and the singing of Syriac chant, perhaps the oldest extant music in the world, a sacred and archaic call and response in a language that would have been understood by Jesus.

This time, eight months later, they drive by night while, behind them, Mosul burns. The fathers stay eyes-front, following the rear lights of the car ahead. Children are quiet but awake. There is no laughter and no singing, no cars toot their horns. The monastery is dark, lit only in flashes from the headlamps. Otherwise, it is only by the smell of the oleander, and the steady cooling of the air, that they know they are on the road to Mar Mattai.

Among them is Sarmad Ozan, formerly a young deacon in the cathedral in Mosul, where he sang the daily liturgy. When Isis captured the city, the cathedral clergy thought they would stay. In a few days, however, Isis issued its infamous decree:



Under threat: A Syriac monk in the monastery Mar Musa al-Habashi

convert to Islam, pay a tax on unbelievers or die. Sarmad, his fellow clergymen and this band of 50 Christian families fled to find sanctuary in their mountain stronghold.

They leave behind the bodies of brothers and fathers, and the shelled-out ruins of their shops and houses. They also leave behind much of what it meant to be a Syriac Christian.

The ancient cities of Nimrud and Nineveh that they visited proudly to show their children the glories of the Assyrian empire from which they claim

descent - soon these will be bulldozed by Isis. They leave behind the treasures of Assyria in the Mosul museum - Isis will loot the smaller antiquities for the black market and smash the statues too big to sell. And on the way to Mar Mattai, they pass the monastery of Mar Behnam: its gates are already barred by Isis. From the steeple flies the black flag. In a few months, it will be destroyed.

What they carry with them is their liturgical music. It preserves strains of the earliest religious chants of Mesopotamia

and of court songs sung for Assyrian emperors 2,000 years before Christ. Its antiquity is matched by its simplicity: clergy and congregation sing together, dividing between boys with high voices and older, bigger men who sing more deeply. Beyond this there is no distinction of note or pitch, and no melody. The call and response format is thought to enact a conversation between man and God.

Tonight, they will again sing the old songs. They make for the inner rooms: the hermits' cells burrowed into the cliff-face; the Saints' Room, with its reliquaries set in niches in the rock; the chapels dug deep into the holy mountain.

There, crammed into the rough caves, Sarmad and the other deacons push to the front and stand in a line. They are joined by the old monks and the priests, in black cassocks and embroidered skullcaps. The priests start the singing in deep voices, then the deacons and younger men answer at a higher pitch. Now the other men in the congregation fall in, back and forth, call and response, as it has been for millennia.

It grows quicker, and louder, filling the small rooms in the belly of the monastery. But Sarmad hears something else - the congregation are weeping as they sing. Because tomorrow, or soon after, they will leave for the Kurdish territories, for the refugee camps and then for abroad, in Sarmad's case for Newcastle in the North of England, where he was when I spoke to him; and they may never hear this music again.



By George Richards

Researcher whose rare chant recordings are at tinyurl.com/pb6mszx

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AT THE BIRTH OF MODERN ART

The blockbusting Keys to a Passion show at Paris's Fondation Louis Vuitton will surely be one of the cultural highlights of this year



Nick Foulkes

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Last year it was all about the building. The Fondation Louis Vuitton was the architectural happening of 2014: Frank Gehry's lighter than light essay in steel, glass and wood that seems to rise like mist among the trees of the Bois de Boulogne. Once in a generation or so Paris allows itself a controversially contemporary building. And like the Pompidou and the Tour Montparnasse before it, this modern mega-gallery has divided opinion and come in for a fair bit of attention.

When I visited the Keys to a Passion exhibition recently, the place had already shed its sepulchral air of newness and seemed to be settling into the fabric of the French capital as an established part of cultural life. With the building becoming accepted as a Parisian landmark, attention has turned to the art and, although I do not want to make the "if you only go to one show this year ..." recommendation, Keys to a Passion is surely one of the cultural highlights of this year.

In assembling the greatest hits of early modernism, curator Suzanne Pagé shows how taboo-busting artists of the late 19th and 20th centuries continue to guide the contemporary artists of today. And the effect of having so many truly emblematic works of modern art gathered together in one place is simply stunning. To stand in front of

The Scream, on loan from the Munch Museum, and to look upon what competes with La Gioconda for the title of the world's most famous painting, is to create a personal memory that will last a lifetime. But this is just one in room after room of instantly recognisable works.

For instance I was more interested to look at Matisse's La Danse, the Fauve masterpiece painted for businessman Sergei Shchukin; it hangs alongside a monster collage completed just two years before Matisse died, which bursts with the same energy and life of work 45 years its junior. Matisse's old frenemy Picasso is well represented with three paintings (including La Lecture, which really should be renamed 'Woman wearing an Apple watch') and one sculpture. The erotic subtext of the Picassos is echoed in a trio of voyeuristic Picabia nudes, that manage to be kitsch, creepy, celebratory, salacious and slightly satirical.

Everywhere one looks there is a superabundance of power pictures: seven Mondrians, including two First World War works composed only of black crosses and dashes on a white background that, show his move from pointillism to full-strength abstraction. This show offers the visitor a seat in the delivery room to watch the birth of some of the most famous artistic movements of the 20th century. And in between the big names are some fascinating



To stand in front of The Scream is to create a memory that lasts a lifetime



Showstopper: Edvard Munch's The Scream

© MUNCH-MUSEET/MUNCH-ELLINGSEN GRUPPEN/BONO

discoveries, including a series of five self-portraits by Helene Schjerfbeck painted over 30 years from 1915 that show the effect of time on both her face and her artistic style that becomes almost Baconesque.

Having been gathered together as examples of "key" paintings in the development of modern and, by extension, contemporary art, the pictures are divided into four themed zones. The first deals with the existential anguish of the human condition; led by The Scream and ably supported by the likes of Bacon, Giacometti and Otto Dix. This makes the contemplative feel of the next room - inter alia Monet, Hodler,

Nolde and a gifted Finnish landscape artist called Akseli Gallen-Kallela - all the more soothing. Pop is the theme of the third room. This show suggests that the movement started as early as the second decade of the century with Robert Delaunay's The Cardiff Team. The final sequence is devoted to music and includes, among others, four Kandinskys.

It was, of course, André Malraux who promulgated the idea of the Musée Imaginaire, probably what we would call a virtual museum today. What Suzanne Pagé shows is that nothing beats the real thing. *Keys to a Passion runs until 6 July. Info: fondationlouisvuitton.fr/*

AN iPhone ON THE WRIST

Ahead of its much-trumpeted launch date, we take an early look at what Apple's latest gadget actually does

David Phelan

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You've heard a lot of predictions about the impending arrival of Apple's first original gadget since the iPad. The Apple Watch goes on sale from 24 April. But what exactly is it and how is it to actually use? I've had one for three weeks now and have put it through its paces.

It is certainly beautifully crafted, coming in two sizes and three different builds (an aluminium sports version, stainless steel model and deluxe gold edition). Starting at £299, all are handsome and identical in terms of processor, features and software, including 10 distinct and highly customisable watch faces that feature views of Earth from space and Mickey Mouse.

But the Watch is essentially a subtle way to receive notifications such as texts and emails on your wrist. This means you can track the latest Facebook updates by discreetly looking at your wrist instead of



Technowizardry: The stainless steel model of the Apple Watch, which communicates by tapping

being immersed in your smartphone. It uses a sophisticated vibration called a Taptic Engine which means that when a notification comes in, the watch gently taps you on the wrist. It works brilliantly.

Say a text says "Dinner at 7.30pm or 8pm?" The Watch will suggest replies like "Dinner

7.30pm", "Dinner 8pm" or "Don't know". If none suits, tap the microphone icon and dictate a reply to send as text or voice file. It's quick and easy, though best for short messages rather than long emails.

You do need an iPhone (it only works with Apple's handsets from the iPhone 5

onwards, not rival phones). And that needs to be nearby, mind, because the Watch uses the data connection and GPS from the phone for most of its services. Without being connected to a phone it does still tell the time, fortunately.

Assuming you stay near your iPhone, the Watch can be made to do all manner of other things by means of its apps. Maps is a highlight: you speak your destination into the Watch's microphone and it plans your walking route, tapping to tell you where to turn.

Citymapper, British Airways and Uber are among the first apps to be created, along with the Activity app, which counts your steps and even demands you stand up every hour if you've been too lethargic.

You can also make and receive phone calls on the Watch, though it feels a bit Secret Service-y. Still, it means you may only take your iPhone out of your pocket to make long calls or read an ebook, say. For short interactions, the Watch does it all.

PowerMonkey Explorer

As our daily existences are now furnished with portable devices that operate on finite battery lives, it's no surprise we are increasingly dependent on chargers. I have long been a PowerMonkey fan and it has



added the Explorer to a wide range of products intended to keep our gadgets powered up on the road. The Explorer, which sells for around £65, is a small rocket-shaped gizmo that comes with a solar slave, a small panel that you point at the sun to get energy. The good news is that it even works in the watery sunshine of a European spring. The other good news is that it comes with a wide array of adapters for various phones, iPods etc. There is no bad news.

Graham Boynton

Polished Oval Wi-Fi Cufflinks/2gb USB

There is something sub-James Bondish about a pair of cufflinks that are capable of carrying two gigabytes-worth of information. They are also actually rather attractive – designed by Ravi Ratan to be rhodium-plated with a polished silver finish. One cufflink conceals a 2GB USB flash drive and the other contains a mini router, which can serve as your own Wi-Fi hotspot for tablets, laptops, iPhones, androids

and other wireless devices. Although it's compatible with the latest Windows iterations and Mac systems, it's a little complicated as the Wi-Fi cufflink requires software to be installed on your host computer. The software can be stored on your USB cufflink, so it's not that complicated.

They are available online from gadget outlet Brookstone (brookstone.com), for around £170.

Graham Boynton

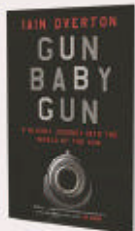


BANG GOES A PEACEFUL WORLD

A billion guns are now in circulation from markets in Somalia to schools in the States, says a shocking investigation into our fatal love affair with the firearm

Gun Baby Gun

by Iain Overton
Canongate (£18.99)



At one point in *Gun Baby Gun*, Iain Overton mentions that as a young man in Northern Ireland he ran a gun club, firing pistols and

rifles, and was a reader of *Guns & Ammo*. Then, he notes laconically: "I saw someone get shot and things changed."

The change occurred in 1999, on a ferry off Guadalcanal. Overton had gone to the Solomon Islands to learn about shark-hunting, little realising that a tribal war was in progress. When he did realise, he decided to leave. His ferry, with Malaitan soldiers aboard, was followed by motorboats filled with rival Isatabu militia. A firefight ensued and the young man next to him, with whom he had been talking a few minutes earlier, was shot in the neck and fell dead at his feet.

Overton has reported in print and film from many countries around the world, including quite a few war zones, and in *Gun Baby Gun* he uses his travels to explore our fatal love affair with the firearm.

He relates how he and a colleague were mugged in Papua New Guinea by wild highland gangsters in elaborate wigs, armed with long rifles, who took their rucksacks, clothes and money. They reported the theft to a policeman, a giant of a man in mirrored shades and a moustache, who threatened to burn down the local villages if the white men's possessions were not returned. Twelve hours later they were. He



Endemic: Honduras, where the murder rate is 18 times that of the US

remembers a training camp in the West Bank where American tourists are taught to shoot Palestinian "terrorists" and an open-air market for contraband AK47s in Mogadishu. The AK47 features on the national flags of Zimbabwe, East Timor and Burkina Faso, and is so common that in some places it can be bought for as little as \$50.

Overton has supped full of horrors, and is not reticent about sharing them. He recalls a female doctor in a Cape Town trauma ward, understandably hardened by her job, interested only in the fact that a patient has been shot: "I don't need to know ... a guy we've spent a long time helping and given lots of resources to, that he then brags about how many women he has raped. That's too hard to hear."

The reams of statistics he supplies are just as shocking as his accounts of violence. There are now nearly a billion guns in the world - about one for every seven people - and 12 billion bullets are manufactured every year. The United States has a murder rate of about 5.3 per 100,000 people, Honduras 90.4 and that country's San Pedro Sula, "the most violent city on Earth", has a rate of 172. On a visit there, he talks to a mortician and a journalist, and hears stories so appalling that even he cannot bring himself to repeat them.

Besides his journalism, Overton is director of investigations at the charity Action on Armed Violence. He concedes that guns have legitimate uses, for defence and recreation, but there is never any doubt about whether he is in favour of them. On a hunting safari in South Africa, he listens to conservationist arguments about how game reserves

Further reading on ... guns

AK47: The Story of the People's Gun by Michael Hodges. A breezy account of how a Soviet antique invented in 1947 became the world's favourite gun.

Gun by Stephen King. Written in a cold fury after the massacre at Sandy Hook, it offers an urgent polemic on what needs to be done about guns in America.

More Guns, Less Crime by John R Lott Jr. Influential and inevitably controversial study presenting the argument against gun control.

The Illustrated World Encyclopedia of Guns by Will Fowler and Anthony North. Amply fulfils the promise of its title, with 1,200 colour illustrations.

Vernon God Little by DBC Pierre. An alarmingly funny novel about an American high-school massacre, it won Pierre the Booker Prize.

The Gun Seller by Hugh Laurie. Comedy caper about a kind-hearted hitman, wildly improbable but nonetheless enjoyably addictive.



Learning early: Adam Lanza, who killed 26 people at Sandy Hook

maintain stocks of wild animals and counter the devastation caused by sheep and cattle grazing, but then he shoots a springbok. In a moment straight out of Bambi, he notices one of its offspring, tail quivering, looking back for her mother. Afterwards he is photographed with his trophy: “My eyes looked like the eyes of a killer.”

As he investigates the police, military and criminals, the manufacturers, dealers, smugglers and lobbyists involved in guns, his attention is inevitably drawn to the gun mania, fuelled by Calvinist paranoia and billions of dollars, that prevails in the United States. The US has more gun shops than petrol stations. At gun shows federally licensed dealers are not required to make background checks or even demand ID and an al-Qaida spokesman has advised jihadis that that is where they should buy their automatic rifles.

Since 9/11 America’s police forces have been extensively

militarised, so sleepy little towns have been provided with SWAT teams that often raid the wrong houses, shooting children, grandparents and pets with impunity. And since the massacre of 20 children at Sandy Hook elementary school in 2012 gun laws have been significantly liberalised; in some states now you can carry a gun into church. Such is America’s faith in the gun that it has handed over hundreds of thousands of weapons to the security forces of Iraq and Afghanistan, many of which have ended up in the hands of the Taliban and Isis, which it is fighting against.

It would be interesting to read a book about guns that took the opposite line to Overton’s, but I’m not sure it would be possible to write one.



By Lewis Jones

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DO EMIGRANTS EVER TRULY BELONG?

As life gets more international, one of our finest literary critics explores feeling ‘homeloose’ in his adopted land

The Nearest Thing to Life

by James Wood
Jonathan Cape (£12.99)



Clarity tends not to be the defining quality of much scholarly literary criticism.

Particularly in the theoretical disputes of recent decades, academia has often put difficulty above elegance. This is not the case, however, with British-born critic, novelist and Princeton academic James Wood. His new book of conversational essays - as illuminating in their quiet sophistication as they are revealing about Wood himself - explores how religion, death and exile might be marshalled to think through aspects of the literary.

For Wood, “the good critic has an awareness that criticism means, in part, telling a story about the story you are reading”. In this spirit, he interweaves readings of authors as various as Chekhov, Sebald and Penelope Fitzgerald with a thread of memoir about his Durham childhood and experience of migrating to America, where he has lived since 1995. His thoughts on the consequences of this migration offer the book’s most moving and suggestive moments.

In a deeply felt meditation on being out of place, Wood observes the street on which he lives in Boston and feels “recognition, but no comprehension, no real connection, no past”. This is frequently the experience of one so displaced, whether by choice or necessity: without

warning we find ourselves ambushed by a panic of disconnection. Then, as Wood puts it, “ordinary life closes itself around what had seemed, for an instant, a desperate lack”, and one continues as usual, nonetheless remaining - to some degree - a stranger.

Wood proposes the neologism homelooseness to describe his inhabiting of “a structure of departure and return that may not end”. Through a reading of Edward Said, he argues that such homelooseness cannot claim the transcendental prestige of exile, but is “marked by a certain provisionality”. Where exile is “acute, massive, transformative”, homelooseness “can be banal, welcome, necessary, continuous”. We who are homeloose continue to come and go.

In Sebald’s *The Emigrants*, he finds an acknowledgement of “the difference ... between homelooseness and homelessness”, an understanding that one person may find their own experience of loss inadequate compared with the real sufferings of others. For Wood, coming to understand that what once seemed a small choice - to leave home - was instead a large one, might be what “constitutes a life”. Ultimately he arrives at the imponderable question that all who decide to displace themselves must ask: whether one has, in the end, made the right choice.



By Patrick Flanery

Acclaimed American novelist and critic now living in the UK
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FULL POWER TO THE HALF-TUCK

Shirts out are in for the British as untucked tails have a fashion moment – but such studied scruffiness is de trop for the French



Alice Hart-Davis

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It's a look to make mothers, teachers and heads of department despair: the half-tucked shirt is having a fashion moment.

In case you're wondering, the "half-tuck" is where a normal shirt, one with buttons down the front, is worn – preferably with studied nonchalance – with one front tail hanging out. It is an under-the-radar style affectation, in that until you know that it is a deliberate

Smart + casual =

Half tuck, quarter tuck...

Along with other apparently minor peculiarities, such as the hipster tendency to button a casual shirt fiercely all the way to a bearded chin, or a penchant for rolling a long-sleeved shirt up above the elbow, these tiny variations in style often given an overall impression of no more than slight scruffiness. But this varied interplay of smartness and casualness can signify any number of different things – from being an ambitious ad exec to a countercultural youth. After all, since men only have a shirt and trousers to play with, the way they manage those cuffs, shirt-tails and buttons becomes intricately subtle.

look, you won't even register it, though you may already have subconsciously marked down the wearer as a bit of a scruff.

David Beckham has been doing it for years, and wears his half-tucked shirts with characteristic aplomb. But now there are even online tutorials showing how to do a half-tuck (though anyone needing instruction in how to get the look surely has no business going anywhere near it).

In creative circles and media agencies in London, the half-tuck has become commonplace. And Reece Walker, one of London's leading hair colourists, says there is another even more refined fashion innovation to be considered: "Rather than tucking half the front in, you can do a real half-and-half, so it's business up front and party out back."

"The tucked in at the front, tails out at the back look is much better than the front half-in-half-out," agrees Oliver Tezcan. As founder of theIdleMan.com, he's an expert on these matters. "A tucked-in front is flattering as it lengthens the silhouette and, for a casual look, having the back hanging loose looks less 'buttoned up' than a fully tucked-in shirt."

According to Tezcan: "The trend for wearing very low-slung jeans/trousers came first, and the fact that it's very hard to keep your shirt tucked into low-riding jeans meant shirts were permanently half untucked. The look then became a thing in its own right and people started to do it deliberately."

Nonetheless, all these variations on the look have been met with derision from chic men on the other side of the Channel. "This is something



Stylish: Vogue Paris's Emmanuelle Alt shows how it's done

I see as very British – particularly as a personal strategy to hide one's figure and look better when you have a bit of a beer belly," says the stylish Pierre-Yves Le Guernic, a Parisian brand strategist.

"That's a typical way of relating to fashion that a Frenchman would never have.

A Frenchman would think that his body would have to fit the fashion, not the other way round. You would not see a refined or elegant Frenchman dressing like this."

Although there is the same creeping casualisation of French business dressing as there is in the UK, with the same wearing of suits without ties, or companies permitting jeans on Fridays, Le Guernic still feels that having any part of the shirt hanging out is too much to contemplate.

The only exception to this disdain is the female half-tuck, which is deployed in an even more low-key way than among men. Its chief exponent is the ineffably stylish Emmanuelle Alt, editor-in-chief of *Vogue* Paris, who tends to push just one handful of a loose top roughly into the waistband of her trousers (so that's more of a quarter-tuck, really) and whose button-fronted shirts are pulled up and bloused out just a touch.

But Alt is one of those higher beings who can wear anything and look fabulous. Back on the mortal plane, the deliberate informality of the male half-tuck may appeal to the ethos of tech and ad firms where the fun and funky office is intended to keep workers fizzing with brilliant ideas, but it is never going to sit comfortably with those who value the rigour and professionalism engendered by traditional business dress.

So we certainly won't be seeing the half-tuck in the UK's corridors of power. "Of course not!" says one senior civil servant, aghast, when asked if he allowed his minions to dress like this, albeit adding, after a thoughtful pause, "though I do allow spotted ties these days."

MARC PIASECKI/WIREIMAGE

GREECE'S SHROUDED BEAUTY

Returning after decades to the temple of Bassae, I found it has been hidden under a tent since 1987. But the flapping cloth also conceals signs of hope



Harry Eyres

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You rounded the last bend on a winding rocky road and there it was. Not shining, creamy white like the Parthenon but a cold stern grey, the Doric columns growing as naturally out of the Greek mountainside as if they were petrified trees. This was the temple of Apollo Epikourios at Bassae in the Peloponnese, built in the 5th century BC by Iktinos, the architect of the Parthenon. Left pretty much alone until it was rediscovered in 1765 by the French architect J Bocher, Bassae survived roofless and pedimentless but otherwise almost intact.

The shrine is still there (praise be to Zeus), one of the most perfect Greek temples in existence and one of the world's greatest and most revolutionary buildings, but it is no longer open to the sky and to the gods. Since 1987 a huge, mournfully flapping and increasingly mouldy tent has covered the monument while complex restoration work is carried out.

Seeing the temple in this state on a cold March morning, nearly 40 years after being stunned by its bare, rugged magnificence, was the most shocking moment of a nostalgic trip to the Peloponnese with an old friend to revisit sites we had last inspected as schoolboy classicists. The venerable building seemed like a patient on life-support.

We could appreciate the exquisite detail of the carving of the Doric columns with their

subtle entasis (bulging), though we could not enter the cella to inspect the famous embedded Ionic columns and the lone Corinthian one (Bassae is highly unusual among Greek temples in incorporating all three orders). But everything was changed by the tent, interrupting the relationship with the landscape and the way the sanctuary emerges from it. You could not help feeling the shrouded, melancholy-looking temple was an emblem of the whole beleaguered country.

At least Bassae is being cared for, however slow the pace. Elsewhere in the Peloponnese, and at Delphi across the Gulf of Corinth, there were many signs of archaeological progress, revival and hope. The site museums at Olympia and Delphi have improved out of recognition. The one at Olympia, with its splendid hall displaying the pediments and metopes of the temple of Zeus, its marvellous terracotta statues and bronze helmets, and the

super-smooth Hermes of Praxiteles, is now fully worthy of those objects and the flower-strewn site by the river Alpheus. Sadly, more than 60 statuettes were stolen in 2012.

We visited a whole new major site - Messene in the southern Peloponnese, a vast city from the 4th century BC, built for a people long oppressed by the Spartans. Messene is an early example of Hippodamian town planning inspired by egalitarian principles according to which all citizens should have equal plots of land and access to public buildings. Both the site and the fine little museum are beautifully maintained.

Greek art and archaeology, as the thrilling new Defining Beauty exhibition at the British Museum makes clear, are not just part of our European past, but a vital strand of our present and future. While the remains of whole civilisations are being destroyed in a frenzy of nihilistic iconoclasm, we would surely do well to preserve and

cherish the Greek artefacts that have somehow managed to defy time and whose birth represents something like the Big Bang of our civilisation.

When I got back to London, I made some enquiries about the progress of the Bassae works. I was told there was some good news; money had been found to replace the frayed and mouldy tent. That was not quite the good news I was hoping for. How about this idea: European nations, in a gesture of goodwill, get together in providing a fund to hasten the works and ensure the speedy removal of the tent?

Also in London, I popped into the British Museum to see the Bassae frieze - the reliefs from the temple, hardly less splendid than those of the Parthenon, depicting the battles of Greeks and Amazons and Centaurs and Lapiths, which were bought at auction by the British Museum in 1815 for £19,000 and removed by Charles Robert Cockerell. Maybe we owe the Greeks even more than goodwill.



Slow restoration: Bassae's temple has been hidden from view for 28 years

FRANK JENSEN

The Mayor of Copenhagen likes to run, ride his bicycle, have brunch in Hamlet's castle and watch his beloved Liverpool FC

Friday evening

On Fridays I usually leave my office around 5pm but sometimes still have to work afterwards. This weekend, I went down to Sydhavn, a working-class neighbourhood here in Copenhagen. It has good housing for workers; in fact, ex-prime minister Anker Jorgensen lived in his flat there even while he was in office. Social Democrats there were celebrating the party's anniversary, so I went to wish them happy birthday and was pleased to be able to give a speech announcing that Sydhavn is going to get its own underground station. I left around 9pm and went home to my wife, Jane. She's the head of a kindergarten, so she's very busy too and we don't get a lot of opportunities to talk during the week; we try to catch up on Friday nights.

Saturday daytime

I get up around 7am and go for a six- or seven-kilometre run, as I do every morning. Then I might run a few errands, like bike to the post office to send a birthday present to my second son, Lasse. He's caught the politics bug and is currently serving on the local city council. My father was the mayor of my hometown, Ulsted, and like him, I've been



Two-wheeled culture: Frank even cycles in to City Hall

a Social Democrat all my life. Another errand was biking to the liquor store to buy a birthday present for my former chief executive officer, who's now gone to the private sector. I opted for whisky, Scottish of course. I almost always take my bike. Copenhagen is not a hilly city, so you don't get sweaty. Government ministers and CEOs ride their bikes, too. It's not a poor man's vehicle here. And it's safe. I get inspiration when I bike around, and you

can talk to passers-by, which you can't do if you sit in a car.

Saturday evening

I like to watch TV programmes on Netflix. At the moment I'm on *House of Cards*. I watched some this weekend and then we headed out to see some friends before going to my former CEO's birthday party.

Sunday lunchtime

I like spending time with my family. Recently, my wife and I

Curriculum Vitae

Frank comes from a political family and – with a brief interlude in the private sector – has been in politics for most of his adult life. After taking a degree in economics, he sat in the Danish parliament for 20 years. He has been mayor of Copenhagen since 2010.

JAKOB CARLSEN

visited Elsinore Castle [Hamlet's home] with my eldest son, Rasmus, and his girlfriend. On our way home, we checked Liverpool's match against Manchester City. I grew up watching the Premier League on TV, and there were several Danes playing for Liverpool, so like many Danish boys I became a fan. As an old man I can be childish with my sons by watching football.

Sunday evening

In the evening I prepare some work for the next week and sometimes speak to local journalists. Then I might watch a crime show on TV. Right now it's a new one, *Crimes Without Borders* starring Lars Mikkelsen. It's exciting that Danish and Swedish crime shows have become such hits abroad, and even better that we get to see them first.

NEWS WEEKS PAST / 24 APRIL 1961

The first man in space

Yav kharashom nastroyeniyii. Machina rabotayet kharasho...

From outer space came the first human voice, a Russian-speaking voice, informing listening posts on Earth: "I am in good spirits. The machine works perfectly..." Soaring, buoyant,

exultant, Flight Maj Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin, a test pilot of the Red Army air division, surveyed his new domain.

A modern Icarus, he had temporarily broken free of the gravitational forces that bind man to Earth. Above him were the unwinking stars in their true red,



white and yellow against the eternal night of the cosmos. "The sun in outer space," Gagarin reported, "is tens of times brighter." Below him was his home planet, a glowing sphere girdled by "a narrow belt of soft light blue colours." "The entire transition from blue to black... is beautiful."

HELP SAVE THE 'WOW'

These giants of the animal kingdom need help. Despite their strength and cunning they're no match for a poacher's rifle. For 50 years WWF has been securing protected areas worldwide, but these aren't enough to stop the killing. To disrupt the sophisticated criminal gangs supplying animal parts to lucrative illegal markets, we are working with governments to toughen law enforcement. We're also working with consumers to reduce the demand for unlawful wildlife products. Help us look after the world where you live at panda.org/50



Silverback Western lowland gorilla.

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WHO KNOWS THE OTTO MAN?

